

THE

REPUBLIC OF FOOLS.

THE
REPUBLIC OF FOOLS:

BEING
THE HISTORY
OF THE
STATE AND PEOPLE OF ABDERA.
IN THRACE.

Translated from the German of C. M. von Wieland,

BY

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ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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TO SIR EMERSON TENNENT, K.H..

ETC., ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR SIR EMERSON,

"A Republic of Fools" needs a wise Protector:
will you—especially gifted with that which the Ablerites had
not—accept the office of King Cassander? Permit me to
subscribe myself,

Yours faithfully,

HENRY CHRISTMAS

LONDON, *February*, 1861.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

Those who deem it necessary to ascertain for themselves the correctness of the principal facts and characteristic features of this history, may, unless they choose to have recourse to the original sources of information—viz. the works of Herodotus, Diogenes Laertius, Athenæus, Ælian, Plutarch, Lucian, Palæphatus, Cicero, Horace, Petronius, Juvenal, Valerius, Aulus Gellius, Solinus, &c., &c., turn to the articles “Abdera” and “Democritus” in Bayle’s Dictionary; they will then see reason to believe that this history is not to be classed among those decided by Lucian to be true ones. The Abderites themselves, as well as their learned fellow-citizen Democritus, are here set in a correct light; and though the author, by supplying what was wanting, by clearing up what was obscure, by removing the real and reconciling the apparent contradictions found in the

before-mentioned writers, may seem to have had access to narratives unknown to others, the intelligent reader will soon perceive that in all these things an authority has been followed whose support outweighs every testimony of *Ælian* and *Plutarch*, and against whose single voice the evidence of a whole world—of all the *Amphyctyonics* and *Arcopagites*—*Decemviri*, *Centumviri*, *Ducentumviri*, of doctors, and masters, and bachelors, collectively and separately—is ineffectual—the voice of nature herself.

Should this little work be considered as a contribution, however small, to the history of the human understanding, the author will be well pleased. He thinks, however, that this high-sounding claim is neither more nor less than is made by every writer of history. He who should renounce it, would thereby reduce his works to the class of mere childish fables.

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THE REPUBLIC OF FOOLS.

BOOK I.

DEMOCRITUS AMONG THE ABDERITES.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary observations on the origin of Abdera, and the character of its inhabitants.

THE origin of the city of Abdera, in Thrace, is lost in the remote antiquity of the heroic ages. It is a matter of very little consequence at the present time whether the name be derived from Abdera, a sister of the renowned Diomedes, whose love of horses* was so great, and his stud so extensive, that they consumed both him and his country; or from Abderus, his master of the horse; or from another Abderus, a favourite of Hercules.

* Palæphatus, in his treatise *De Incredib.*, thus explains the fable that Diomedes fed his horses with human flesh, and was at last thrown to them himself by Hercules.

It was many ages after its first foundation, and when Abdera was a heap of ruins, that Timæsius, of Clazomenæ, undertook, about the 31st Olympiad, to rebuild it. The wild Thracians, who permitted no cities to spring up in their neighbourhood, allowed him no time to enjoy the fruits of his labour. They* soon drove him out, and the town remained unfinished and uninhabited till about the end of the 59th Olympiad.

At that period, the inhabitants of Teos, an Ionian city, unwilling to submit to the conquering arms of Cyrus, sailed to Thrace, and finding a city already built, in one of the most fruitful parts of that country, took possession of it as a forsaken and unappropriated territory. More successful than the builders, they made head against their Thracian neighbours; they and their successors assumed the name of Abderites, and founded a little state, which, like most Greek cities, was a mean between aristocracy and democracy, and was governed—as small republics ever have been.

And now, cry our readers, what is the object of this unmeaning deduction—the origin and fate of this little city, Abdera? What is Abdera to us, and of what moment is it to us whether

* Herodotus, i. 43.

we know, or whether we know not, when, how, where, why, by whom, and to what end, was built a town which for many centuries has had no existence?

Patience, good reader, patience! till we (before I go on further) are agreed in our requirements. Heaven forbid that anybody should give himself the trouble to read the History of the Abderites if he has anything more necessary to do, or anything better to read. "I must study my sermon,"—"I must visit my patients,"—"I have bought five yoke of oxen,"—"I have married a wife,"—then, in Heaven's name, study, prescribe, plough, buy, and marry. Busy readers are seldom good readers: sometimes one thing distracts them, sometimes another; sometimes they half understand us—sometimes not at all—and sometimes (which is still worse) they misunderstand us. He who would read with pleasure, or with profit, must have nothing else to do—nothing else to think of. And if you are in this condition, why should you not spend two or three minutes to learn what has cost so many hours to a Salmasius, to a Barnes, or to a Bayle, and, to be candid, to me too, since I did not in good time meet with the article in Bayle? Would you not have patiently listened to me if I had

begun to relate to you the history of the king in Bohemia who had seven castles, or the legend of the three Calendars? Besides, the Abderites should have been, according to what is said of them, as refined, witty, lively, and intellectual a people as ever the world beheld.

And why so?

This question will not probably be put by the learned reader; but who would write books if every reader knew as much as the author? The question "Why?" is always a very reasonable question; it deserves, in all conversations on human affairs, an answer, and woe to him who is embarrassed, or ashamed, or angry, when he is required to give his opinion. We, for our part, should have given ours unasked, had not the reader been so impatient. Here it is. Teos was an Athenian colony, one of the twelve, or thirteen, planted in Ionia by Neleus, the son of Codrus. The Athenians were ever a lively and intellectual people. Travellers tell us they are so still, and these Athenians settled in Ionia advanced in mental powers, under the climate of this favoured land, as the vine does in perfection when transplanted into the south. The Ionian Greeks were, above all nations of the earth, the favourites of the Muses. Homer himself was,

according to all probability, an Ionian. The songs of love, the Milesian fables (the forerunners of our novels and romances), acknowledged Ionia for their native land. Alcæus, the Horace of the Greeks; the glowing Sappho; Anacreon, the songster; Aspasia, the preceptress; Apelles, the painter of the Graces—all were Ionians. Anacreon was a Teïan by birth. He was a youth of about eighteen years old when his countrymen removed to Abdera; he went with them, and as a proof that his lyre devoted to the Love-God was not left behind, there sang he that song to a Thracian maiden (in Barnes' edition the 61st)—a song in which the wild tones of the indomitable Thrace are mingled, and yet beautifully contrasted, with that Ionian grace so peculiar to his lyrics.

And now, who would not have supposed that the Teïans—in their first origin Athenians, so long established in Ionia, the fellow-citizens of an Anacreon—would have preserved, even in Thrace, the character of an intellectual people? The contrary, however, whatever may have been the reason of it, was without a doubt the case. Scarcely had the Teïans become Abderites when they began to degenerate: not that they altogether lost their former liveliness, and were changed

into sheep, as Juvenal asserts of them—their liveliness merely took an extraordinary turn, and their imagination stole so decided a march upon their intellect, that they were never subsequently able to recall it. The Abderites were not deficient in ideas, but their ideas seldom suited the present occasion—they spoke much, but ever without a moment's thought what they should say, or how they should say it. The natural consequence of this was, that they rarely opened their mouths without giving utterance to some folly. Unluckily this bad habit extended itself to their deeds as well as their words, for they commonly shut the cage when the bird was flown. This drew upon them the reproach of thoughtlessness, but experience proved that they were none the better off when they did think. Did any of their proceedings turn out exceedingly stupid (a circumstance anything but rare), the cause was sure to be that they wished to do it too well; and if any state business gave occasion to long and serious deliberation, it was almost a matter of certainty that of all possible decisions they would come to the very worst. They became at last a proverb among the Greeks; an Abderitish idea, an Abderitish trick, was among them pretty much the same thing as a

Bull with us, or a Lalleburger among the Swiss ; and the worthy Abderites failed not to furnish both jesters and laughers with a rich supply of subjects.

For the present, a few examples will do by way of proof. It once occurred to them that a city like Abdera ought to have a fine fountain. They decided that it should be in the centre of the market-place, and in order to defray the cost they laid on a new tax ; a celebrated sculptor was sent for from Athens in order to prepare a group of statues representing the god of the sea in a chariot drawn by sea-horses, and surrounded by Nymphs, Tritons, and dolphins. It was intended that the sea-horses and dolphins should send forth *jets d'eau* from their nostrils. But when the work was completed, and the statues placed in the spot, it unfortunately appeared that there was scarcely water enough to wet the noses of the dolphins ; and when the fountain was playing, both they and the horses had the uncomfortable appearance of being afflicted with a severe cold. In order to put a stop to the laugh, the group was brought into the temple of Neptune, and when exhibited to strangers the sacristan expressed his sorrow, in the name of the worshipful city

of Abdera, that so rich and splendid a work of art was rendered useless by the poverty of nature. At another time they purchased a very lovely Venus, of ivory, which was reckoned among the masterpieces of Praxiteles. It was about five feet high, and ought to have been placed upon an altar of the goddess. As soon as it arrived, all Abdera fell into ecstasies about the beauty of their Venus; for the Abderites considered themselves acute connoisseurs and enthusiastic lovers of the arts. "She is too beautiful," exclaimed they with one voice, "to be placed on a low pedestal. A masterpiece that does our city so much honour, and which has cost us so much money, can scarcely be set too high; it should be the first thing that strikes the eye of the stranger on his entrance into Abdera." In consequence of this happy thought, they placed the small and exquisite statue upon an obelisk eighty feet in height; and as it was quite impossible at that distance to know whether it was a Venus or an oyster-wench, it became necessary to assure all strangers that nothing more perfect could be seen. These instances will be sufficient to prove that no injustice was done to the Abderites when they were characterized as blunderers; but it is doubtful whether any pro-

ceeding could display their character in a stronger light than the following. According to the testimony of Justin, they allowed the frogs to increase in and about their city to such an extent that they were at last themselves obliged to give place to their croaking fellow-citizens, and the result was, that, under the protection of King Cassander, the Abderites removed to another place. This misfortune did not fall upon them without warning. A wise man who dwelt among them told them long previously that this would finally be the case. Indeed, the fault lay wholly in the means they adopted to avoid the evil; only they could not be induced to see this. What ought, however, to have opened their eyes was the fact that they had not been many months removed from Abdera when a number of cranes came down from the regions of Gerania, and so completely cleared away the frogs, that, for a mile round Abdera, not one remained to greet the returning spring with the chorus "*κοαξ, κοαξ.*"

CHAPTER II.

Democritus of Abdera.—The question examined whether the native city of that eminent man could claim any share in his greatness, and, if so, how much.

No air, says Juvenal, is so thick, no nation so stupid, no place so unknown to fame, but that sometimes a great man arises to reflect lustre upon it. Pindar and Epaminondas were born in Bœotia, Aristotle in Stagyra, Cicero at Arpinum, Virgil in the village of Andes near Mantua, Albertus Magnus at Lessingen, Martin Luther at Eisleben, Sextus V. in the hamlet of Montalto in the marshes of Ancona, and one of the best kings that ever lived at Pau in Bearn : what wonder, then, that even Abdera should have the honour to give birth to the greatest naturalist of antiquity—Democritus ? For my part I do not see how a place can in itself add to or detract from the reputation of any great man, as, for every one who comes into

this world, a birthplace must be found. It may be doubted whether, save Lycurgus, there was ever a legislator who extended his care and precaution to the Homunculus, in order to provide the state with fine, spirited, and well-organized children. We must confess that in this respect Sparta had some claim to the distinction which was shown to her citizens; but in Abdera (as in the whole world besides) chance and genius are permitted to decide.

Natale comes qui temperat astrum; and when a Protagoras* or Democritus arose amongst them, the good citizens of Abdera were as ignorant of the circumstance as were Lycurgus and his laws when a fool or a coward chanced to be born in Sparta.

But this indifference, though it might be said to concern a very important matter, must yet be allowed to pass, because nature, when left to herself, generally renders all extra care for the success of her works superfluous. But although she rarely forgets to endow her favourites with all those qualities by which accomplished men are

* A celebrated sophist of Abdera (somewhat earlier than the time of Democritus), whom Cicero ranks with Hippias, Prodicus, Georgias, and the greatest men of his profession.

distinguished, still education—the drawing out and developing of those qualities—is exactly the task which she leaves to art, and therefore every state must seek for itself the opportunity of affording that instruction which its citizens require. In this, however, the Abderites manifested great want of wisdom, and it would be difficult to find a place where less care was bestowed upon the cultivation of the intellect, the understanding, and the hearts of the citizens.

The formation of the taste arises from a keen and true perception of the beautiful, and is the best groundwork of the celebrated “*Kalokagathia*” of Socrates, making internal beauty and goodness of soul to constitute the noble-minded, beneficent, and happy man; and nothing is easier than to form in us this correct feeling of beauty, if all that we see and hear from our childhood be beautiful. It is no small advantage to be born in a place where the arts and the sciences are cultivated in the greatest perfection—in a well-built town filled with masterpieces of art, as in Athens; and if, in the times of Plato and Menander, the Athenians had a thousand times more taste than other nations, they were doubtless in a great degree indebted to their native city for the advantage.

We have already stated* that the Abderites were enthusiastic in their love of the fine arts, and, indeed, at the time of their greatest splendour, when they were compelled to make way for the frogs, their town was filled with splendid buildings, rich in pictures and statues, provided with a fine theatre and music-hall, was, in short, a little Athens, in all save taste; but unfortunately the strong bias of which we have before spoken extended to their notions of the beautiful and becoming. Latona, the tutelary goddess of their town, had the worst temple; Jason, chief of the Argonauts (whose golden fleece they pretended to possess), the most splendid. Their town-hall looked like a warehouse, and immediately in front of the structure where the business of the state was transacted, cabbage-vendors, fruit and butter women, exposed their stores: on the contrary, the gymnasium, where their young men practised fighting and wrestling, was built upon three rows of columns, and the fighting hall was adorned with representations of deliberate assemblies, and statues in attitudes of grief or of

* Abdera, according to a Greek proverb (upon which, however, according to custom, the learned are not agreed), took the same name as does Florence in the Italian States, "the Beautiful."

thoughtful repose; * instead of these, within the senate-house was presented a more attractive and exciting spectacle, for in its halls the eyes of the senators frequently wandered to the surrounding objects, dwelling with delight on the conspicuously placed paintings of athletic champions, of Diana bathing, of sleeping Bacchantes, or Venus entangled in Olympus with one of her lovers in the net of Vulcan. This latter picture (immense in its proportions) was hung immediately over the benches of the most learned senators, and was always triumphantly pointed out to strangers as a *chef d'œuvre*. Even Phocion himself, grave as he was, would have been compelled, though it were the only time in his life, to indulge in a laugh. It is said King Lysimachus once offered six cities and a dominion of many leagues around them for this picture; but the Abderites could not make up their mind to part with so magnificent a piece, especially as it just filled the entire

* What is here said of the Abderites is by other ancient writers related also of the town of Alabanda.—*S. Cod. Rhodog. Lect. Ant.* lxxvi. cap. 25. [A similar example is to be seen in the present day at Naples, where the principal court of justice in the Vicaria is adorned by a picture of Naples given up to fire and sword by a conqueror!—TRANSLATOR.]

side of the court chamber, and, besides, one of the most celebrated critics had in a learned work suggested the connection of this allegorical painting with the place which it adorned.

To relate all the absurdities of this wonderful people would indeed be endless. One, however, we must not pass over, forming as it did a prominent feature of their constitution, and exercising no small influence over the character of the Abderites.

In the earliest periods of this city there was probably an institution in honour of Orpheus; and the nomophylax, or protector of the laws (one of the chief magistrates), was also leader of their sacred choruses, and precentor of their music in general. At this epoch there was good reason for that regulation; but length of time alone will cause great revolutions, and the observance of ancient laws would become ridiculous, if not modified according to changing circumstances: such a reflection, however, never entered the minds of the poor Abderites. It often happened that a nomophylax was chosen who tolerably well understood the laws, but who sang badly, or knew nothing at all of music. In such circumstances how managed the Abderites? After much and grave deliberation they resolved to

adopt the regulation that the best singer of Abdera should in future be chosen for nomophylax, which rule was observed so long as Abdera existed. That their nomophylax and their precentor might be two distinct personages was never dreamt of, although they had twenty public meetings on the subject.

It is easy to imagine that at this period music was much esteemed in Abdera; everybody in the city was musical—all sang and played on the flute and lyre. Their ethics and politics, their theology and cosmography, had each and all a musical foundation; nay, even their physicians cured their patients by harmonies and melodies.

As far as speculation, mere theory, was concerned, so far they seemed to attain to much the same position as that of the greatest sages of antiquity, of Orpheus, of Pythagoras, and of Plato. But it unfortunately happened that in practice they deviated all the more decidedly from the severity of the rules they professed.

Plato forbade all soft and effeminate strains in his Republic. Music was meant to awaken in the minds of his citizens neither joy nor grief, and together with the Ionian and Lydian mea-

asures* he forbade all Bacchanalian ditties and love-songs, he prohibited the use of all sweet-toned instruments, as the many-stringed lute and the Lydian flute, as calculated to induce pernicious and sensual feelings; the citizens, however, were allowed the use of the guitar and the lyre, and the country people had the shepherd's reed or the pandean pipes. Philosophical enactments similar to these would have produced great dissatisfaction among the Abderites, who never restricted themselves from enjoying all the harmony afforded by their country. They endeavoured to do full justice to a very true, but unhappily by them much misunderstood maxim, that "all serious matters should be treated in a mirthful spirit, and all mirthful matters in a serious one." Extending this principle to music, they came to the most extraordinary conclusions—their sacred hymns sounded like drinking catches, but nobody ever heard strains more solemn than their dance music. The chorus of their tragedies was irresistibly comic, while their war-songs seemed only a fit accompaniment for a procession to the gallows; a performance on the lyre was only esteemed as it succeeded in imitating the flute, and a songstress who wished

* Plato *De Repub.* h. I. iii. Tom. opp. II., p. 398.

to gain admiration was obliged to warble and quaver like a nightingale.* The Abderites had no conception of music that excited the feelings of the heart, but were well satisfied if their ears only were pleased, and they would, without the slightest notice, interrupt the flow of the fullest and richest harmony. In one word, with all their enthusiasm for the arts, the Abderites had no taste, and it was all the same to them whether that which they deemed beautiful was esteemed so on just grounds or not; nature, chance, and good-luck, even when they combined their forces, could scarcely ever attain to so great a power of wonder-working as to endow a born Abderite with common sense. At least it must be allowed that if such a thing ever did happen, Abdera had done nothing towards it, for an Abderite was in general only so far a sensible man as he was destitute of all that marked him as an Abderite. This circumstance explains easily enough how it was that the Abderites esteemed the least those very citizens whom all foreigners regarded as doing their state the most honour. This was not one of their commonplace absurdities; they had a reason for it, and

* Is this notion quite extinct among ourselves?—Let the frequenters of the Italian Opera decide.

one so natural that it would be unfair to reproach them with it. This reason was not, as some suppose, because they had seen the naturalist Democritus, for instance, before he became a great man, or indeed a man at all, amuse himself by trundling a hoop, or by turning head over heels on the grass. Neither was it because, either from spite or jealousy, they could not bear the idea of a greater man being among them than themselves. As to the infallible inscription over the Delphic Temple, not one of their number had wisdom to penetrate its meaning, or from that moment he would have ceased to be an Abderite. The true reason, my friends, why the Abderites did not make much of their fellow-citizen, Democritus, was, they did not esteem him to be a wise man.

“And why not?”

Because they could not.

“And why could they not?”

Because in such a case they must have confessed themselves fools; and that, at least, they were not absurd enough to do. In short, they could with about as much ease have danced upon their heads, taken the moon between their teeth, or squared a circle, as they could have comprehended one who was in all respects their

opposite; thus exemplifying a quality of human nature which must have been noticed even in the time of Adam. Helvetius gathered from this——never mind: what he deduced was thought quite new in his own day to many, but would now be deemed no novelty at all, and lost sight of every moment in consequence.

CHAPTER III.

What kind of man Democritus was.—His travels.—He returns to Abdera.—What he brought with him, and how he was received.—Undergoes an examination, which serves as an example of Abderitan conversation.

DEMOCRITUS (I do not think the reader will regret his time and trouble in making a further acquaintance with the man) was above twenty years of age when he inherited the possessions of his father, one of the richest citizens of Abdera. Instead of reflecting on the manner in which he was to increase or to retain his fortune, the young man resolved to make it the means of self-improvement, by enriching and cultivating his mind to the highest degree possible.

And what did the Abderites say to this resolution of the young Democritus?

The good people had never dreamed that the mind could have any other interests than the mouth, the stomach, and those other portions of

the animal economy which go to make up the whole visible man ; consequently they were not a little astonished at the wonderful freak conceived by their young countryman. For this, however, he cared nothing, but went forth on his way, and for his instruction employed many years in travelling through all such countries and islands as were then accessible. At that period persons anxious to obtain knowledge could only acquire it by personal observation : there were no printing-presses, no newspapers, libraries, magazines, encyclopædias, lexicons, royal dictionaries, or any other of the approved means whereby a man may now, without knowing how, become a philosopher, a critic, an author, in short a universal genius. At that time wisdom could only be attained at the expense of the most costly sacrifices—Lais herself was not more expensive. It was not every man who could go to Corinth, and consequently the number of learned men was small ; but then, the knowledge they possessed was of an order all the higher.

Democritus did not merely travel as did Ulysses, to ascertain the customs and constitutions of mankind—nor as Plato, to seek after priests and visionaries—nor like Pausanias, to gaze on temples, statues, pictures, and objects of

archæology—neither like Dr. Solander, to identify and classify plants and animals; but he journeyed to explore the beauties of nature and art in all their effects and causes, and especially to study man in every state—rude or polished, ingenuous or deceitful, perfect or imperfect—and whatsoever besides might aid him in thoroughly understanding human nature. “Caterpillars,” said Democritus, “in Ethiopia, are surely but caterpillars. But what is a caterpillar?—is it so important as to become a primary study for man? Well, now we are here, we will among other objects study the caterpillars of Ethiopia. There is a worm in the land of Seres which produces clothes and maintains a million of human beings: who knows whether the same useful caterpillar might not be found on the banks of the Niger?” Through this mode of thinking and reflecting, Democritus collected in his travels a fund of knowledge which to him was more valuable than all the gold in the treasury of an Eastern monarch, or the pearls which adorned the arms and necks of his consorts. His knowledge extended from the cedar of Lebanon to the mite in an Arcadian cheese—running through an infinite variety of trees, shrubs, vegetables, grasses, and mosses—and was conversant not merely with

their formation, names, and genus ; but also with their properties, powers, and virtues. But what he appreciated a thousand times more than all his other knowledge was, that at the different places where he thought it worth his while to stop, he had become acquainted, during his sojourn, with the wisest and best men. It soon became evident that he was one after their own heart ; they became his friends, and in the course of conversation they spared him many years of what might have been fruitless toil, by imparting to him the results of their own experience, their own diligence, or their own good fortune.

When, after an absence of twenty years, Democritus, enriched in mind and heart, returned to Abdera, his countrymen had almost forgotten him. He was become a stately and dignified man, courteous and polite, demeaning himself as a man of the world, who had gained much wisdom from mixing with his fellow-creatures ; his complexion, slightly bronzed, told that he had come from the ends of the world, and he had brought with him a stuffed crocodile, a live monkey, with many other wonderful things. For some days the Abderites talked of nothing but their fellow-citizen Democritus, who had returned home with such curiosities ; but after

a short time they began to think they had perhaps rather overrated the great traveller. The worthy person to whose care Democritus had intrusted his estate, had evidently robbed him of at least half his revenues ; yet the naturalist, without hesitation, passed all his accounts. It was but natural that such a proceeding as this should give a great shock to that notion of his wisdom which his countrymen had begun already to entertain ; the barristers and attorneys, who had reasonably looked forward to some pretty pickings by way of law-suits, now shrugged their shoulders, and uniformly expressed their opinion, that a man who had so little sense of his own private interests was obviously unfit to be intrusted with those of the republic. In the mean time, the Abderites did not doubt that he would speedily become a candidate for some high and honourable public employment. Accordingly they began to calculate at what price they might sell him their votes ; one offered him a daughter, another a grandchild, a sister-in-law, or aunt, in marriage, estimating the advantages they might derive from his influence when he should become their chief magistrate, priest of Latona, &c.

Democritus, however, declared that he had no

wish to become a common-councilman in Abdera, or to marry an Abderite lady. Although this resolution frustrated all such plans, they yet hoped to profit, in some way or other, by his acquaintance and conversation : a man who had brought with him from his travels an ape, a crocodile, and a tame dragon, must have many wonderful adventures to relate. They expected he would tell them of giants twelve yards, and of dwarfs six inches high, of men with dogs' and asses' heads, of mermaids with green hair, of white negroes, and of blue Centaurs. But Democritus lied little, and indeed less than if he had never crossed the Thracian Bosphorus.

They asked him whether in the country of the Garamantes he had not met with people without heads, and having their eyes, noses, and mouths upon their breasts ; and an extremely wise scholar, who, though he had never been beyond the walls of his native city, gave himself such airs as though there was not a hole in the earth that he had not crept through, intimated his opinion to a large company, that Democritus had either never been to Ethiopia, or must, when there, have necessarily made acquaintance with the Agriophagæ, whose king had only one eye, placed exactly over

his nose ; with the Ptæambatœ, who always chose a dog for their king ; or with the Artabatites, who go on all fours ; *—“ and if you have penetrated into the extreme part of Western Ethiopia,” continued the learned man, “ I am certain that you must have encountered a people without noses, and another part where the inhabitants have such small mouths that they are compelled to take their soup through a tube of straw.” †

Democritus protested by Castor and Pollux that he could not remember ever having had the honour of meeting with such. “ At least,” said the questioner, “ you met in India with people born with only one leg, but who, notwithstanding, in consequence of the extraordinary breadth of their foot, glide over the ground so quickly that a man on horseback can scarcely keep pace with them ; ‡ what can you say to that ? Did you not also, at the source of the Ganges, meet with a people whose sole nutriment was the scent of wild apples ? § ”

* Pliny's Nat. Hist., B. 4.

† Solinus, B. 30, also Pliny, Mela Pomponius, and other ancient and modern writers, who unhesitatingly speak of such wonderful creatures as though they really existed.

‡ Solinus Polyhistor.

§ Idem.

"Oh! do tell us all about it," cried out eagerly the Abderite ladies, "do tell us, Mr. Democritus. What could you not tell us if only you would!"

Democritus swore, but to no purpose, that neither in India nor Ethiopia had he seen or heard of such wonderful creatures. "Well, what have you seen, then?" asked a round, short personage, who was indeed neither one-eyed like the Agriophagæ, nor dog-headed like the Cynomolgi; neither did he carry his eye on his shoulder like an Omophthalmian; neither, from the simple act of inhaling odour, did he subsist like the bird of Paradise. Notwithstanding all this, he had no more brains in his skull than an American humming-bird, but was none the less qualified for being a town-councillor of Abdera. "Well! but what have you seen?" said the stout gentleman, "you who for twenty years have been travelling about the world, and have seen nothing of all these things. What else can you have seen that is wonderful in those distant countries?"

"Wonderful!" replied Democritus, smiling; "I really found my time so much occupied in examining that which was natural, that I had none to spare for the merely wonderful."

"I must confess," said the stout gentleman, "that it does not repay one for the fatigue of passing over so many seas, and ascending so many high mountains, not to see more than one of us can see just as well at home."

Democritus did not like to quarrel with people about their opinions, and least of all with the Abderites, yet he was unwilling they should suppose that after all his travels he had absolutely nothing to say; he therefore endeavoured to choose from among the fair Abderites who were of the party, one to whom he could unreservedly explain all he had to tell. He fixed on one with the eyes of a Juno, which, in spite of his great experience, led him erroneously to suppose that their owner possessed a little more intellect and perception than the rest.

"What could I do," said he to her, "with a lady whose eye was placed on her forehead or on her elbow? or how would all my knowledge of art help me to awaken the heart of a cannibal beauty? Besides, I have always been too well satisfied with the soft influence of two fine eyes placed in their natural position, to be tempted to look tenderly on the great ox-eye of a female Cyclops."

The beauty with the large eyes was doubtful

how to understand this speech, and gazed at the speaker with silent astonishment, smiled, displayed her fine teeth, and then looked from side to side, as though endeavouring to penetrate his meaning.

The other ladies had understood it as little as she did, but because Democritus had addressed himself to this one with the large eyes, they decided that he had said something very agreeable to her, and this they signified to each other by a variety of grimaces; one wrinkled up her little nose, another pursed up her mouth, a third distended hers, which was already large enough, a fourth opened widely her little eyes, a fifth drew herself up to her full height, and Democritus saw all this, remembered he was in Abdera, and—was silent.

CHAPTER IV.

The examination is continued, and turns upon a dispute as to beauty, in which Democritus becomes much excited.

To be silent is sometimes an art, yet not so great a one as certain people would have us believe, who are wisest when they are most silent.

If a wise man finds himself in the company of children, he has only to act accordingly, and talk to them in their own way.

“I have been, indeed,” said Democritus to his inquisitive companions, “candid enough to confess that of all those things about which you have questioned me I have seen none; but do not imagine that in my various travels by sea and land, I have not noticed many things which might gratify your curiosity. Believe me, they are things that would appear to you much more

wonderful than any of those of which you have been speaking."

At these words the fair Abderites opened both eyes and ears, and drew nearer.

"That is a speech worthy of a traveller," said the corpulent alderman, while the scholar elevated his eyebrows, hoping he should find something or other to criticize or improve upon, let Democritus say what he might.

"I was once in a country," began Democritus, "where I was so well pleased that, during the first three or four days I spent there, I wished myself immortal, that I might remain there for ever."

"I never left Abdera," said the alderman, "but I believe that there is not another place in the world that I should prefer to it; and I feel the same here as you did in the country with which you were so much pleased. I would with pleasure resign all the rest of the world could I but be immortal and remain for ever here. But what was the reason that you were so delighted with the country after only a three days' residence?"

"You shall hear presently. Imagine a vast country, most charmingly varied by hills, valleys, forests, mountains, and meadows; under the

dominion of perpetual spring and autumn, every spot cultivated and irrigated, everywhere blooming and fruitful, always verdant; abounding with forests of the finest fruit trees,—grapes, figs, lemons, and pomegranates, growing spontaneously like the oaks in Thrace,—groves of myrtle and jasmine, the flowers beloved by Eros and Cytheræa, not in hedges as in this our country, but in dense tufts and large trees, and as full blown as my lovely countrywomen.” (This was rather a mistake of Democritus, and it may serve as a caution to future narrators that it is better to look at the society they are amongst before paying such compliments, however flattering they may sound.) The beauties placed their hands before their eyes and blushed, because unfortunately there was not one among them who could do honour to the comparison, although they did not fail to puff themselves out as well as they could.

“And these delightful groves,” he continued, “were animated by the song of innumerable birds, and filled with myriads of many-coloured parrots, eclipsing the splendour of the sun with their varied hues. What a country! I cannot conceive why the Goddess of Love has chosen Cythera for her residence, when a spot like this

exists in the world. Where could the Graces more pleasantly join in the dance than in the country where the groves wave deliciously over the banks of transparent violets and sparkling springs, and where, in the midst of a dense verdure of the liveliest green, lilies and hyacinths, with a thousand other beautiful flowers whose names are unknown to us, are blooming naturally, and filling the air with luxurious fragrance?"

It is easy to suppose that the ladies of Abdera had not less lively imaginations than the men, and the picture which Democritus, without intending any harm, had so vividly drawn, was more than their weak minds could support; some sighed with delight, some looked as if they could inhale even there those voluptuous perfumes; the beautiful Juno let fall her head on the cushion of the sofa, half shut her magnificent eyes, and fancied herself transported to the blooming borders of one of those springs shaded by roses and citron trees, from the branches of which clouds of ambrosial vapour greeted her. She began, in the midst of that sweet sensation, to slumber, and then she thought she beheld kneeling before her a youth beautiful as the son of Semele, importunate as Love himself; she rose to contemplate him better, and found him so

graceful and glorious that the words with which she was about to reprove him—— Scarcely had she——

“And what do you think is the name of this fairy country of which all I could say would give you but a shadowy notion? It is just that very Ethiopia which, by my learned friend, is accounted so populous in human monsters, certainly, very unworthy natives of such a fatherland; but I again repeat that in all Ethiopia or Libya, though those countries contain so many different nations, there is not a man to be seen who carries his head otherwise than we do, or who has not just as many eyes and ears as ourselves, and in a word——”

A heavy sigh which might proceed from a heart oppressed either by pain or pleasure, issued at this moment from the bosom of the beautiful Abderite, who, during the time of the narration of Democritus, dreamed all the particulars in which her heart took so deep an interest; but as none around her could be aware that in her reverie she had fancied herself some hundreds of miles from Abdera, in the midst of the sweetest odours, listening to a thousand birds trilling their love-songs, and viewing the countless parrots with their variegated plumage,

and above all that she had imagined a handsome youth with golden locks and coral lips kneeling at her feet, who could be surprised that this sigh was heard with general astonishment?

"What is the matter with you, Lysandra?" unanimously exclaimed the ladies, anxiously surrounding her. The fair Lysandra, who at once perceived where she was, blushed and assured them it was nothing. Democritus, becoming aware what was the real state of the case, persuaded them that a draught of fresh air would quickly restore her; but he mentally determined in future to paint all his pictures of one colour only, as was the custom in Thrace.

"Ye gods!" thought he, "what excitable imaginations do these Abderite women possess!"

"Well, my fair inquisitive countrywomen," continued Democritus, "what do you think is the colour of the inhabitants of this beautiful country?"

"What colour! why should they be of a different colour from other people? Did you not tell us that their noses were in the middle of their faces, and that in every other respect they were the same kind of beings as we Greeks are?"

"Undoubtedly; but would they be the less

men and women if they were born of a darker hue?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the handsomest among the Ethiopian nations (that is to say, those who, according to our ideas of beauty, resemble us the most) are those of a brown or olive complexion, as the Egyptians; and those who live further on, in the more southern parts, are, from the crown of their head to the sole of their foot, as black as the ravens of Abdera."

"Is it possible? And don't the people scream out at one another when they meet?"

"Scream! for what reason? They please each other with their raven blackness, and fancy that nothing can be more charming."

"How droll!" cried the Abderites, "to be as black as if they had been dipped in pitch, and then dream of beauty—how stupid must such people be! Have they no painters to depict them an Apollo, a Bacchus, or the Goddess of Love and the Graces? Or can they not learn from Homer that Juno had white arms, Thetis silver feet, and Aurora rosy fingers?"

"Oh!" replied Democritus, "these good people have no Homer; or if they have one, depend upon it that his Juno will have arms as

black as coals. I have heard nothing of painters in Ethiopia, but I saw a girl whose beauty had occasioned as much mischief among her countrymen as the daughter of Leda among the Greeks and Trojans, and this African Helen was as black as ebony."

"Oh, describe to us this marvellous beauty!" cried the fair Abderites, who, from the most natural cause in the world, took the greatest interest in the recital.

"You will have some difficulty in forming a notion of it. Imagine the complete reverse of what a Greek considers as beauty; the elegance of a Grace, and the plenitude of a Ceres; imagine black hair, not flowing in curls on the shoulders, but short, and naturally frizzled, like wool; the forehead wide and incurvated; the nose short, slit in the middle, and the gristle squeezed flat; the cheeks round, like those of a trumpeter; the mouth"—(here Philena smiled in order to show how small her own was)—"the lips very thick and turned upwards, and two rows of teeth like strings of pearls."

The beauties laughed all at once, although they could have no reason for so doing but to display their teeth—for what was there to laugh at?

"But their eyes?" asked Lysandra.

"Oh! as to her eyes, they were so small and so watery that it was long before I could consider them pretty."

"Democritus approves of Homer's ox-eyes, it seems," said Myris, looking ironically at the large-eyed beauty.

"In fact," replied Democritus, with a look from which the most innocent mind might have concluded that he was disposed to flatter, "beautiful eyes cannot be too large, nor ugly ones too small."

The lovely Lysandra cast a glance of triumph upon her sisters, and her large eyes shed forth a whole glory of delight upon the happy Democritus.

"May I ask what you mean by beautiful eyes?" asked the little Myris, and her nose seemed perceptibly to sharpen.

A glance from the fair Lysandra seemed to tell him, "You certainly will not be embarrassed to find an answer to this question."

"I mean the eyes through which shines a high and noble soul," said Democritus.

Lysandra looked perfectly disconcerted, as one who had heard something quite unexpected, and was at a loss for a reply. "A beautiful soul!"

thought the fair Abderites; "what strange notions the man has brought out of foreign countries! This beats his monkeys and parrots."

"But a truce to these subtleties," said the sleek alderman. "I think we were speaking of the fair Helen of Ethiopia; and I should be very glad to learn what intelligent people could find pretty in her."

"Everything!" replied Democritus.

"Then they can have no idea of beauty," said the learned man.

"Pardon me," replied the narrator; "but as this Ethiopian Helen was the object of the admiration and the desire of all, it must be concluded that she accorded with the idea of beauty which each one among them found in his own imagination."

"You are of the school of Parmenides? Parmenides of Elis is recognized as the inventor of the doctrine of ideas or essential images; it was received by Plato into his system, and, being so appropriated, is generally called by his name," said the scholar, putting himself in an argumentative posture.

"I am nothing but myself, which is very little," replied Democritus, half frightened. "If you are adverse to the word *idea*, let me express

myself in another way. The beautiful Gulleru (this is the name of the negress of whom we are speaking)——”

“Gulleru!” exclaimed the ladies, bursting into a laugh which threatened to be interminable —“what a name!”

“And what became of your beautiful Gulleru?” asked the sharp-nosed Myris, with a look and tone three times as sharp as her nose.

“If you ever honour me with a visit,” replied the philosopher, with the utmost courtesy, “you will learn what is become of the beautiful Gulleru. Now I must keep my promise to these gentlemen. The figure of the beautiful Gulleru——”

“The beautiful Gulleru!” repeated the ladies again, with another burst of Abderitan laughter; but this time Democritus did not suffer himself to be interrupted. He continued: “—unluckily inspired the young men of her country with the deepest passion. This seems to prove that she was deemed pretty; and without doubt the reason that she was thought so beautiful was the same as that for which she was not deemed ugly. These Ethiopians understood the difference between what was pretty and otherwise; and if they agreed in their judgment upon this Helen,

it must have been because they were unanimous in their idea of beauty and ugliness."

"It is not a consequence," said the learned Abderite; "might not each find something different and peculiarly lovely in her?"

"That is not impossible, but proves nothing against my argument. Agreed that one may have admired her little eyes, another her thick lips, a third her large ears, then this supposes a comparison between her and the other Ethiopian beauties. The others had eyes, lips, and ears, just as Gulleru: if hers were found prettier than common, then they formed a model of beauty in which, for instance, her eyes might be compared with other eyes, and so on; and this is all I meant by my ideal image."

"However," replied the learned man, "you will not pretend to affirm that this Gulleru was unquestionably the prettiest among all black girls before, in, and after, her own time,—I mean the prettiest in comparison with the model you have been speaking of."

"I cannot see why I should affirm it," replied Democritus.

"There might be another, having, for instance, smaller eyes, thicker lips, larger ears?"

"Possibly, for aught I know."

“And in reference to this last the same presumption may serve, and so on without end, so that the Ethiopians could have no model of beauty; for must it be said that endless eyes, endless lips, and endless ears, can be supposed?

“How subtle the learned men in Abdera are!” thought Democritus. “When I admitted that there might be a black girl with smaller eyes or thicker lips than Gulleru’s, I did not say that she would be therefore more agreeable to the Ethiopians than Gulleru. Beauty must have a determined measure, and what is beyond this is removed as far from it as that which falls short. Who would conclude that the Greeks have ever imagined perfect beauty to consist in the largeness of the eyes or the smallness of the mouth, or that a lady whose eyes were two inches across, or whose mouth was too small to insert a straw in it, would therefore be esteemed by the Greeks as supremely beautiful?”

The Abderite was beaten, and it was clear that he felt it. But a learned Abderite would rather be choked than confess himself vanquished—were not Philena and Lysandra and the stout alderman there, whose good opinion he wished to obtain? And how easy it was for him to bring Abderite ladies and gentlemen to his

side! For a moment he knew not what to say, but, in full confidence that a thought would come, he answered in the mean time with an ironical smile, which, as he thought, proved his contempt for the arguments of his opponent, and a readiness to strike the decisive blow.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed at last, as if he were replying to the last speech of Democritus;* "can you carry your love of paradox so far as to affirm, in the presence of these beauties, that a creature like this Gulleru whom you have just described, was a Venus?"

"You have forgotten," replied Democritus quite composedly, "that we have not been speaking of myself and these beauties here present, but of Ethiopians. I did not affirm anything; I was simply relating what I have seen, and have described to you a beauty according to the Ethiopian taste. It is not my fault if the Greek ugliness be considered beauty in Ethiopia, nor can I see the right I have to decide between Greeks and Ethiopians—I presume it is possible that both are right."

A loud shout of laughter, such as is usually elicited elsewhere by a nonsensical speech,

* A very common trick of Abderite scholars and critics.

assailed the philosopher from every quarter. "Hear! hear!" cried the sleek alderman, holding his sides with both hands. "What *can* our countryman say to prove that both are right? I should like above all things to hear such an argument—for what other purposes are learned men? The earth is round—the snow black—the moon is ten times as large as the whole Peloponnesus—Achilles could not overcome a tortoise in the race! Is it not so, Mr. Antistrep-siades?—is it not, Mr. Democritus? You see that I too am a little initiated in your mysteries—ha! ha! ha!"

All the Abderite ladies and gentlemen again sympathized in his mirth; and Mr. Antistrep-siades, who had already made an attack upon the supper of the jovial alderman, had the politeness to support the general laughter with loud applause.

CHAPTER V.

Unexpected solution of the difficulty, with new examples of Abderitan wit.

DEMOCRITUS was in the humour to amuse himself with the Abderites, and they were equally willing to be amused with him; if he were too wise to criticize their national or individual faults, he was willing to be taken by them for an overwise man, whose native brilliance had become a little tarnished by travelling, and who was now only useful, by his whims and caprices, to afford them merriment. He continued, after the laughter caused by the witty conceit of the stout alderman had subsided, from the point where he had been interrupted by the jocose little man:—

“Did I not tell you that if the Greek ugliness could be esteemed beauty in Ethiopia, it might happen that both were right?”

"Yes, yes, you did say so; and a man is responsible for his words."

"If I said it, of course I must prove it; that is certain, Mr. Antistrepsiades."

"If you can."

"Am I not also an Abderite? and, besides, I have only to prove the half of my position in order to prove the whole. That the Greeks are right it is not necessary to prove,—this is a question which they themselves have long ago decided; but to prove that the Ethiopians are right too, there lies the difficulty. If I intended to fight my opponents with sophisms, or to rest satisfied by silencing without convincing them, I would, as the advocate of the Ethiopian Venus, leave the decision of the case to internal conviction. Why, would I say, do men fancy this or that figure or complexion beautiful? Because it pleases them very well."

"But wherefore is it pleasing?"

"Because it is agreeable to them."

"And why agreeable?"

"My dear sir, I would beg leave to say, you must cease to ask, or I cease to answer. A thing is agreeable to us because it makes an agreeable impression upon us. I challenge all your hypercritics to find another reason. Well,

it would be ridiculous to try to persuade a man that the thing which he likes is unpleasant, or that he is wrong in pleasing himself in a way that he finds agreeable; consequently, if the figure of a Gulleru most delights him, then she most pleases him; and if she pleases, then he calls her beautiful, or such a word is useless in his language."

"And if an insane man eat stale eggs for fresh ones," said Antistrepsiades, "what then?"

"Stale eggs for fresh ones! Well said, upon my honour! Beat that, Mr. Democritus," exclaimed the alderman.

"Fie, fie! Democritus," whispered Myris, holding her hand before her face; "how can you speak of stale eggs? At least, spare our noses."

Everybody may see that the lady ought to have addressed this reproof to the wily Antistrepsiades, as he it was who first had mentioned the objectionable eggs, or to the alderman who had proposed to Democritus to beat the notion; but it was said with a view of making Democritus appear ridiculous. Those present agreed with Myris, who could not lose this opportunity of raising the laugh on her side. That Democritus should not only swallow the

eggs of Antistrepsiades, but also receive a reproof in addition, appeared so agreeable to these ladies and gentlemen, that they all laughed at once, and began to demean themselves as if the philosopher were entirely beaten and could not rally again.

One may carry a joke too far. The good-natured Democritus had experienced a great deal during the last twenty years, but since he left his native town, never had he met with a second Abdera; and now, being back again, he could for a moment scarcely realize where he was. What could he do?—how was he to deal with such people?

“Well, cousin,” said the alderman, “so you cannot digest these eggs—ha! ha! ha!”

The ladies tittered “hi! hi! hi!” in a shriller tone, amidst the shouting of the gentlemen’s “ha! ha! ha!”

“I am vanquished,” cried Democritus, “and to prove that I take my defeat in good part, you shall see if I am deserving the honour to be your countryman and relative.” He then began, with a skill in which no Abderite was his equal, to intone a laugh, from the lowest tone gradually ascending to the unisons of the “hi! hi! hi!” of the ladies; such a laugh was

never heard before nor after, while Abdera stood on the ground of Thrace.

At first the ladies tried to resist, but it was impossible to stand against the desperate crescendo—they were at last carried away as by a rapid current, and the power of contagion went so far that the case appeared serious. The ladies asked mercy with weeping eyes, but Democritus turned a deaf ear, and the laugh increased. At last it seemed that he intended to grant them a truce, but, in fact, only to enable them to prolong the torture he intended them; for scarcely had they recovered their breath when he recommenced the same scale a note higher, but running into so many shakes and roulades that even the wrinkled judges, Minos, *Æacus*, and Rhadamanthus, in their fiendish court, would not have been able to keep their countenance. How much bright hair was shaken out of curl, how many corsages irremediably damaged, how many delicate sides doomed to a month's aching, how many digestions disturbed, and how many proprieties disordered—who shall say? To add to the absurdity, in the midst of all this the stout little alderman exclaimed that he would not exchange this evening for half Thrace, making the

scene worthy the pencil of a Hogarth, had a Hogarth then existed.

We cannot tell how long it might have lasted, because it was one of the peculiarities of the Abderites that they never knew when to leave off; but Democritus, with whom everything had its time, thought a comedy which never came to an end a very tedious pastime. He kept to himself all the pretty things which he could have said in defence of the Ethiopian Venus if he had had sensible beings to reason with, wished to all the ladies and gentlemen what they did not possess, and went home, not without feeling much astonishment at the society which might be found in that city by calling on an alderman.

CHAPTER VI.

An opportunity for the reader to recover his equanimity after the commotion caused by the events of the former chapter.

“ Good, artless, simple-minded Gulleru !” said Democritus, on his return home, to a well-conditioned, curly-headed black woman, who came waddling towards him with open arms. “ Come to my heart, honest Gulleru ! It is true you are black as the goddess of night, your hair is woolly and your nose is flat, your eyes are small and your ears are large, and your lips like a budding peony ; but your heart is pure, sincere, joyous, and kind. You think evil of no one, never practise deceit nor torment yourself with the affairs of others, and do nothing you would be ashamed to confess. Your soul is without falsehood, as your face is without paint ; you know neither envy nor mischievous joy, and never has your flat, honest nose been drawn

into a wrinkle by scoffing at a fellow-creature. Whether you charm or not, is to you the same; your life is innocent, at peace with yourself and the whole world, always ready to please and to be pleased, and deserving of man's trust and affection. Good, gentle-hearted Gulleru! I could give you another name, ending with *ane* or *ide*, *arion* or *erion*; but your name is pretty enough, because it is *yours*, and I am not Democritus if the time is not coming when every honest heart will respond to the name of Gulleru."

Gulleru could not comprehend the meaning of this sentimental speech of Democritus, but she perceived that it was a literal outpouring of the heart; and in this way she understood as much as was necessary.

"Was this Gulleru his wife?"

"No."

"Was she his mistress?"

"No."

"Was she his slave?"

"To judge by her appearance, no."

"How then was she attired?"

"As handsomely as if she had been a maid of honour to the Queen of (Sheba). Rows of pearls ornamented her locks, her arms, and her

neck; a garment of fine stuff, with stripes of various colours richly draped, and confined round the waist by a splendidly embroidered girdle, closed by an emerald clasp; and what need I add more?"

"The attire was rich indeed."

"At least you may rest assured that as she appeared, no Prince of Senegal, Angola, Gambia, Congo, or Loango, could have beheld her with undazzled eyes."

"But——"

"I perceive that you have not yet arrived at the end of your questions. Who was this Gulleru? Was she the same who was spoken of before? How came she with Democritus, and on what footing was she living in his house? I own these are fair questions, but for the present I confess my inability to answer them. Do not think that I am unnecessarily reserved, or that there is any peculiar secresy in the matter. The reason why I cannot give you an answer is the most simple in the world. Thousands of authors have been in a similar position, but amongst them all, scarcely one would candidly confess the reason. Shall I explain to you mine? Well, in short, I know nothing whatever about it; and as I am not the

historian of the beautiful Gulleru, you will understand that I am under no obligation respecting that lady. Should it happen (which I do not foresee) that an opportunity should occur of learning more particulars touching Democritus and her, depend upon it everything shall be made known to the reader."

CHAPTER VII.

Patriotism of the Abderites, their sympathy for Athens as their mother-city.—Some proofs of their Atticism, and of the unpleasant sincerity of the wise Democritus.

DEMOCRITUS had scarcely been a month amongst the Abderites when he became as insupportable to them, and the Abderites to him, as men can be to each other who disagree every moment in their ways of thinking and acting.

The Abderites entertained the highest opinion of themselves, their town, and republic. Their ignorance of every important event which had occurred out of their district, was at once the reason and the consequence of so ridiculous a notion. It therefore resulted, by a very natural train of reasoning, that they could not perceive how anything could be right and proper which was otherwise managed than in Abdera, or that was unknown to them. A notion at variance with their own ideas, a habit differing from

theirs, a manner of thinking or reasoning which was new to them, was considered, without further investigation, as ridiculous and absurd. Even nature was repudiated in the narrow sphere of their action, and although they went not so far as the Japanese do, in believing that out of their locality only devils, spectres, and monsters were to be found, they regarded the other portions of the globe, and its inhabitants, as unworthy of their attention ; and if accidentally they found an opportunity of learning or seeing anything new, they were puzzled what to do except to wonder and congratulate themselves that they were not like other people. This was carried so far that they could not recognize a good citizen in the man who had seen, in other places, better customs and establishments than at home. Whosoever would please them must act and speak as if the town and government of Abdera, with all it contained, were irreproachable, and the very *beau idéal* of a good republic.

The city of Athens alone was exempted from this contempt of everything not Abderitan, but this only because the Abderites looked up to it as their mother-country. They were proud to be acknowledged as the "Thracian Athens ;"

and though this appellation was only given to them ironically, they prided themselves on the flattery, and endeavoured to imitate the Athenians in everything, copying them about as justly as a monkey imitates a man. If, in order to appear lively and spirited, they fell every moment into the ridiculous;—if they treated serious things with levity, and childish ones seriously;—if they assembled the people or the town-council twenty times upon every trifle, in order to speak and listen to long speeches on subjects that might be decided in a quarter of an hour by any man of common sense;—if they were continually projecting improvements and enlargements, discovering as soon as they were begun that it was beyond their means to complete them;—if they interlarded their half-Thracian language with Athenian phrases;—if, without the least taste, they affected a great passion for the arts, and always talked of pictures, statues, music, orators, and poets, without having had one painter, sculptor, orator, or poet, deserving to be so called;—if they built temples like baths, and baths like temples;—if they ordered the picture of the net of Vulcan for their town-hall, and that of the restitution of the lovely Chryseis for their academy;—

if they went to comedies which made them cry and to tragedies which made them laugh,—in these and a thousand other matters the good people fancied themselves Athenians, and were, in fact,—Abderites.

“How sublime and sonorous is the poem by Physignathus about my quail!” said an Abderite lady.

“So much the worse!” said Democritus.

“Look,” said the archon of Abdera, “at that part of this building, which is intended for an arsenal. It is constructed of the finest Parian marble; confess that you never before saw so tasteful a work.”

“It has certainly cost the republic a great deal of money,” answered Democritus.

“That can never cost too much which does honour to the republic,” replied the archon, feeling himself, at the moment, another Pericles.

“I know you are a connoisseur, Democritus, as you have always something to criticize in everything. Pray do find me a fault in this façade.”

“A thousand drachmas for a defect, Mr. Democritus!” cried a young gentleman who had the honour of being nephew to the archon, and had just returned from Athens, where he had

perfected himself by spending half his fortune, and transforming himself from a simple Abderite into an Athenian fop.

"The façade is pretty," modestly remarked Democritus, "and would become Athens, Corinth, or Syracuse, and, if I may be allowed to say so, I see but one fault in this splendid building."

"A fault!" repeated the archon, with an expression of countenance peculiar only to an Abderitan archon.

"A fault! a fault!" echoed the silly fop, laughing immoderately. "May I ask you, Democritus, what you find fault with?"

"A trifle," replied Democritus, "only that this beautiful front cannot be seen."

"Cannot be seen! and why not?"

"Well, by Anubis! how can it be seen with these ugly old houses and sheds all around, and interposing between people's eyes and the beautiful façade?"

"Those buildings stood there long before you and I were born," answered the archon.

Dialogues of this kind often occurred, almost daily and hourly, as long as the philosopher lived among them.

"How do you like this purple, Democritus? You have been in Tyre, have you not?"

"Yes, madam, I have, but not that purple—this is brought to you from Sardinia, by the Syracusans, and sold as the purple of Tyre."

"But, at least, you will admit this veil to be an Indian byssus of the finest kind."

"Of the best quality, lovely Atalanta, fabricated in Memphis and Pelusium."

Thus this really honest man made himself two enemies in one minute;—could anything have been more vexatious than such sincerity?

CHAPTER VIII.

Preliminary notice about the theatre of Abdera.—
Democritus compelled to give his opinion upon it.

THE Abderites were very proud of their theatre. Their performers were common citizens of Abdera, who either could not live by their business or were too lazy to acquire one. They had no scientific notion of the dramatic art, but had consequently so much the higher opinion of their own abilities, and really they were not destitute of some talent, as the Abderites were by nature buffoons, jugglers, and pantomimists, and every part of their bodily frame assisted in giving significance to the subjects of which they were speaking. They possessed one dramatic author of their own, called Hyperbolus, who, in their opinion, had brought their stage to such a state of perfection as to be but little behind that of Athens itself. He was great in comic as in

tragic compositions, and wrote the drollest satires,* in which he parodied his own tragedies in so ludicrous a style that (to use the Abderite expression) one could laugh at them till one's sides split. In their opinion Hyperbolus combined in his tragedies the sonorous versification and the powerful imagination of Æschylus with the eloquence and pathos of Euripides, as well as, in his comedies, the humour and sparkling wit of Aristophanes with the fine taste and elegance of Agathon. The facility with which he composed his works was his greatest boast. Every month he produced a tragedy, as well as a farce: "My best comedy," said he, "costs me no more than fourteen days, notwithstanding that its performance lasts four or five hours."

"Heaven be gracious to us!" thought Democritus.

Now the Abderites, from all directions, insisted on his giving them his opinion of their theatre, and though unwilling to dispute with, or still less to flatter them, he was obliged to give his decision.

"How does this tragedy please you?"

* Greek farces, resembling the Italian *opera buffa*, of which we may form an idea from the "Cyclops" of Euripides, the only piece of this kind now extant.

"It is well chosen; what kind of an author must he be who could spoil such a subject?"

"Did you not find it very exciting?"

"A piece may be very exciting in some parts, though a miserable affair as a whole," said Democritus. "I know a sculptor from Sicyon who has a passion for chiselling only figures of Venus,—they look generally like very ordinary young girls, who have the finest legs in the world. The secret of which is, that the man takes his wife for a model, who, happily for his Venuses, possesses at least beautiful legs. So the most miserable poet may succeed in a stirring part, if it happens that he is in love, or has lost a friend, or has met with any accident to make him uneasy in heart and mind, so as to be placed in the position of the person whom he wishes to depict."

"Then you do not find the 'Hecuba' of our author perfect?"

"I think that the man perhaps has done all he possibly could, but all the feathers which he plucks from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, in order to cover his own nakedness, though perhaps they do him honour in the eyes of those spectators who have not so good a recollection of all those authors as myself, only prejudice me

against him. A crow as she is created by nature, is, in my opinion, prettier than if she were adorned with the feathers of the peacock or the pheasant. Generally I require from the author of a tragedy a good production to obtain my applause, by the same right as I expect from my shoemaker a good pair of boots for my money; and although I confess it is more difficult to make a good tragedy than a good pair of boots, I am nevertheless entitled to expect from every tragedy as many good qualities as from a boot, *e. g.* all that belongs to a good article."

"And what do you require from a well-booted tragedy?" asked a young Abderite nobleman, laughing heartily at the fair conceit which he thought he had uttered.

Democritus was conversing with a little circle of persons, who appeared to listen to him without noticing the witty question of the young gentleman. "The true rules of a work of art," said he, "cannot be arbitrary. I require no more from a tragedy than Sophocles required from his own, and that is, neither more nor less than what the subject of itself will in good hands produce. A simple, well-reflected plan, in which the author has foreseen and prepared everything, and brought it in a natural way to the point; where every part

forms a necessary link, and the whole is a well-organized, free, noble, and beautiful production ; no tiresome exhibitions, no episodes, no scenes for filling up gaps, no speeches whose end is impatiently awaited, no action which does not tend to the principal object. I expect characters taken from life, noble, but not too much so for human nature ; no superhuman virtues, no monsters of wickedness ; personages speaking according to their individual conceptions and feelings, so as to fill up their peculiar parts according to their past and present circumstances and destinations, as they would naturally, in case of any given event, speak and act, or they must cease to be what they are. I require that the author should be not only well acquainted with human nature as the model of his copies, but that he should have some regard for the spectators, and that he should have a perfect knowledge of the way in which he can best touch their hearts ; that he should prepare imperceptibly every stroke which he intends to make, that he should know when he has gone far enough, and that before tiring us with uniform impressions, or exciting our feelings to a degree that begins to be painful, he grant us time to reflect and rest from emotion ; and that he should know how to

multiply the emotions which he imparts to us, without injury to the principal action. I demand from him easy, beautiful, and polished language; expressions always powerful and warm, simple yet sublime, never too pompous or too low, but strong and nervous without being stiff or harsh, shining but not dazzling; true heroic language, which is always the expression of an elevated mind inspired by the subject immediately before it, never saying too much or too little, but fitting, as a garment adjusts itself to the body, to the conviction of the speaker. I require from one who makes heroes speak, the possession of a great soul, and that, being inspired by the power of imagination, he puts into the mouth of his hero all that he feels in his own heart. I demand——”

“O Mr. Democritus!” exclaimed the Abderites, who could not stand it any longer, “you are making many demands. You may require all you please, but in Abdera we are satisfied with much less—we are pleased if an author moves us. A man who can make us laugh or cry at pleasure, is, in our eyes, divine, and let him manage it as he likes; that is his business, and not ours. We like Hyperbolus—he moves our hearts, and makes fun for us; granting

sometimes that he makes us yawn, he is nevertheless a great author. Do we require any further proof? "

"The blacks on the Gold Coast," said Democritus, "dance with transport to the noise of a pair of sheepshanks, and pieces of tin, which they strike one against the other. Give them a set of cowbells and a pipe, and they will fancy themselves in heaven. How much wit had your nurse, when you, as children, were moved by her stories!—the most stupid tale sung in a plaintive tone was sufficient. But is that any reason that the music of the blacks and the tale of the nurse should be excellent in themselves? "

"You are very polite, Democritus."

"I beg your pardon. I am so unpolite as to call everything by its name, and so obstinate that I will never confess that all is beautiful and excellent which is so called."

"But the opinion of a whole people would, I hope, be of more value than the self-conceit of a single individual."

"Self-conceit!—that is just what I wish to see exiled out of the realm of the fine arts. There is not one of all the requirements from which the Abderites so kindly release their favourite

Hyperbolus, which is not founded upon the strictest justice; the opinion of a whole people, if it be not a sound one, may and must be wrong in innumerable cases."

"Now, by Jupiter!" cried an Abderite, who appeared to be very well satisfied with his own opinion, "you would finally argue us out of our five senses."

"Heaven forbid!" replied Democritus; "if you would be modest enough not to pretend to more than the five senses, it would be the greatest injustice to trouble you in the quiet enjoyment of them. The five senses, if all used, and properly used, are pretty good judges in all cases wherein is to be determined what is white or black, smooth or rough, soft or hard, thick or thin, bitter or sweet; a man who never goes further than he is led by his five senses, goes always on sure ground. And, in fact, if Hyperbolus takes care in his comedies that every sense is pleased while none are offended, I could guarantee them a good reception, even were they ten times worse than they are."

If Democritus had gone no further at Abdera than Diogenes did at Corinth, his liberty of speech might have brought him into serious trouble; for though the Abderites were willing enough to

ridicule solemn things, they could not bear any jest upon their puppets and hobby-horses. But Democritus belonged to one of the first families in Abdera, and, which was of more importance, he was rich. For those two reasons they forgave in him what would not have been tolerated from a philosopher in a frieze cloak. "You are an insupportable man, Democritus," snarled the beautiful Abderites; but withal they bore with him.

That same evening the poet Hyperbolus composed a terrible satire on the philosopher. Next morning it was found on all the drawing-room tables in the city, and the night after it was sung in all the streets of Abdera, for Democritus had set it to music.

CHAPTER IX.

Good-humour of the Abderites, and how they succeeded in avenging themselves upon Democritus for his want of politeness.—An example.—The Abderites make a law against all travelling, in order that an Abderitan child should not become wiser than his parents.—Curious case, in which the nomophylax Gryllus decides a difficult question arising from this law.

It is commonly a dangerous thing for a man to have more sense than his neighbours. Socrates paid for his superiority with his life, and if Aristotle saved his skin, accused as he was of heresy by the chief priest Eurymedon, it was because he took to his heels in time. "I will take care," said he, "not to give the Athenians a second opportunity of sinning against philosophy." * The Abderites, with all their human infirmities, were not ill-natured—Socrates, amongst them, might have attained the age of Nestor. They would have considered him a

* *Ælian, Var. Hist. iii. 36.*

marvellous fool, and laughed at his uncommon absurdity, but to go as far as the cup of hemlock was not in their character. Democritus went to work so sharply with them that certainly a less genial people would have lost their patience. Yet all the revenge they took upon him was in speaking (without troubling themselves on what grounds) as hardly of him as he did of them. They criticized everything he undertook, treated as ridiculous all that he said, and when he ventured to advise anything, they did just the contrary. "We must bring down this philosopher," said they; "he must not fancy that he knows everything better than we do." And following out this maxim, the good people of Abdera committed one folly after another, and thought they should succeed admirably if they could but annoy him. Happily they did not attain their purpose, because Democritus only laughed at their efforts, and, in spite of all their provocation, he had not one grey hair the earlier. "Oh! the Abderites! the Abderites!" exclaimed he often; "there, they have given themselves another slap on the face, hoping thereby to exasperate me."

"But," said the Abderite ladies, "can there be a worse man? In everything he differs from

us, and he always finds harm in everything that pleases us: it is very unpleasant to be always contradicted."

"But if you are always wrong," answered Democritus—and indeed how could it be otherwise?—"you are indebted for all your notions to your nurses, and your ideas are all just what they were in childhood. Your bodies are grown up, but your minds are yet in the cradle. How many among you have taken the trouble to examine upon what grounds they find a thing right, fair, or good? Like children, you fancy everything pretty and good which tickles the senses and pleases you, and on what petty causes and circumstances (often irrelative to the case) does it depend whether you are pleased or not! How embarrassed you would often be if you were asked why you were pleased with one thing and disliked another! Caprice, temper, wilfulness, the habit of being imposed upon by other people, of seeing with their eyes, of hearing with their ears, and of whistling after them the tune they have whistled—these are the motives which influence you instead of your own judgment. Shall I tell you the reason of it? You have formed to yourselves a false idea of liberty. We are, you say, a free people,

and you think that common sense has nothing to do with you. Why should we not be allowed to think as we please, love and hate, esteem or despise, as we please? Who has a right to contradict us, or to question our tastes and feelings? So then, my dear ladies, think and act, love and hate, wonder and despise, just when, what, and why you please. Commit as many follies as you like, make yourselves as ridiculous as you choose. To whom is the thing of any earthly consequence, so long as it is only a matter of trifles—puppets and hobby-horses? Who would desire to disturb you in the exercise of your rights to pull the one and ride the other exactly according to your own good pleasure? Let it be granted that the doll is an ugly one, and that what you call a hobby-horse looks more like an ox or a donkey. What does that matter? If your follies make you happy, and nobody else unhappy, how can it concern other people that they are follies? Why should not the high council of Abdera go in a solemn procession of leap-frog to the temple of Latona, if it so pleased the sovereign people? But, my dear fellow-countrymen, your absurdities are not all so innocent as these would be; and when I see that through your whims and fancies you

do yourselves grievous wrong, I should be no friend of yours if I looked on and said nothing. For instance, your pigmy war, like that of Homer's frogs and mice, with the people of Lemnos,—the most unreasonable and unserviceable that ever a state engaged in: and for the silliest cause in the world—about a ballet-girl! It is clear that you must have been under the unmitigated influence of your evil genius when you resolved on it. And nothing was of any effect that could be laid before you as against it. The Lemnians were to be chastised, and as you are a people of warm imagination, nothing seemed easier to you than to take possession of the whole island. In fact, you never see a difficulty till you have actually run your nose against it. Yet even all this might pass if you had at least committed the execution of your determination to a fit man. But to make the young Aphron your commander-in-chief, without any other ground than that the ladies thought him in his new armour as handsome as Paris himself, and to forget, in the pleasure of seeing a great bush of flame-coloured plumes rolling over his beardless face, that it was not a mere review the conduct of which you were intrusting to him,—this, don't deny it, was a very

Abderitish trick indeed; and now that you have paid for your folly with the loss of your honour, your gallies, and your best troops, what does it avail you that the Athenians, whom even in their follies you have taken for your masters, have been guilty of as senseless a proceeding, and have reaped just as pleasant a result?"*

In this tone did Democritus talk to the Abderites as often as they gave him the opportunity, but as these opportunities occurred very often, it can hardly be expected that they should find the philosopher's orations very pleasant ones. This is the consequence, they said, of allowing conceited young wiseacres to travel all round the world: they learn to despise their fatherland, and, after ten or twenty years, back they come as cosmopolites, with their heads full of outlandish notions, fancying that they know everything better than their grandfathers, and that

* The Athenians, in their war with Megara, had, if we may believe Aristophanes, no better reason than that some silly young nobleman of the latter city had attempted to revenge the abduction of a courtesan of their town, by carrying off a nymph of similar status from the conservatory of Aspasia. Aspasia's influence was all-powerful with Pericles, that of Pericles with the Athenians, and so came to be kindled a war with Megara.—See also Plutarch's *Life of Pericles*.

whatever they have seen abroad is better than what they find at home. The ancient Egyptians, who never allowed anybody to travel till he had seen at least fifty years, were wise people.

On the spot went the Abderite senate to work, and made a law that no son of Abdera should travel further than the Corinthian isthmus for a longer period than one year, or at all except under the care of a tutor well advanced in years, and of genuine Abderite stock, education, and way of thinking. Young people must indeed, declared the decree, see the world, but on that very account they ought not to stay in any place longer than is necessary for them to see what is to be seen there. The tutors shall take special notes of the hotels, the cookery, and the charges, that really useful information may be gathered for the benefit of those who may come after them.

Besides this, the law provided that the tutor should prevent the young Abderite from being entangled in any unnecessary acquaintance. The landlord of the hotel, or one of the waiters, would be able to say what was most worthy of observation in the town and neighbourhood, who were the most remarkable scholars and artists, where they dwelt, and at what time they could

be seen, all which the tutor would set down in his note-book ; and thus in two or three days a man who knew how to make good use of his time, could get through a great deal of business.*

Unluckily for this wise law, it happened that two young Abderite gentlemen of considerable importance were out of the country at the time when it passed, and was, according to old custom, proclaimed before the people in their usual place of assembly. One of these was the son of a scrivener, who, through sharp practice and underhanded dealings, had, in the space of forty years, accumulated no inconsiderable fortune, and had married his daughter, the ugliest and stupidest animal in all Abdera, to the nephew of the fat little alderman of whom already honourable mention has been made. The other was the son of the nomophylax, and it was his duty, in order to be as soon as possible, and the sooner the better, associated with his father in his office, to travel to Athens, and there to study classical music, as diligently at least as the heir of the scrivener was making himself acquainted

* Those who imagine that this passage is an anachronism will do well to consult the works of those who have written "*de re cauponariâ veterum*."

with the milliners and other damsels of the Attic capital.

The framers of the law had not considered the peculiar position in which these gentlemen found themselves, and the question was, what could be done?—should the law itself be modified, or should a dispensation be granted by the senate for this particular case?

“Neither one nor the other,” said the nomophylax, who had just finished composing a new dance for the feast of Latona, and was exceedingly satisfied with himself. “To change anything in the laws the people must be called for, and that would only give our malcontents an opportunity for inflammatory declamation. With regard to the dispensation, it is true that the laws are mostly made for the sake of granting dispensations from their authority, and I doubt not that the senate will grant us what every one in similar cases is entitled to demand. Yet every licence looks like a favour, and I see not why we should incur any obligation. The law is a sleeping lion as long as he is not aroused, and we can walk round him as safely as round a lamb; but who would have the impudence and audacity to call forth its powers against the son of the nomophylax?”

This defender of the law was, as we may perceive, a man who had a very refined idea both of the law itself and of his position, and was always ready to make use of the prerogatives of his situation. His name deserves to be known: it was Gryllus, the son of Cyniscus.

CHAPTER X.

Democritus goes to reside in the country, and is assiduously visited by the Abderites.—Different curiosities, and a conversation about the Schlaraffen country.

DEMOCRITUS, on his return to his own country, had flattered himself with the hope of being useful to it through the improvement of his own mind and heart. He never imagined that the Abderite heads could be in so hopeless a state; but after having resided among them for a long time, he saw clearly that the attempt to improve them would be indeed a vain enterprise. Everything among them was so disarranged that it was difficult to decide where to commence the amelioration. Every abuse hung on twenty others, and it was impossible to abolish one without transforming the whole. A good epidemic which should extirpate the whole race from the

face of the earth, save a few dozen children, would be the only means, thought he, of helping the state: as to helping the people, that was out of the question. He determined, as far as possible, peaceably to withdraw from the company of his fellow-citizens, and to apply to the improvement and embellishment of his estate all that time which he could spare from his daily study. But unluckily this estate lay very close to Abdera; and as the situation was undeniably beautiful, and the way to it one of the pleasantest walks out of the city, it so happened that every holiday brought about him a multitude of ladies and gentlemen, many of them claiming relationship with the philosopher, and making a fine day and an agreeable walk the excuse for breaking in upon his beloved solitude.

Now, though Democritus pleased the Abderites as little as they pleased him, yet the effect in the two cases was widely different. He fled from them because they occupied his time and wearied him; they followed him because he occupied theirs, and thereby saved them from *ennui*. He well knew what to do with his time; they had nothing at all to do with theirs.

"We have come to help you to pass away the time in your hermitage" said the Abderites.

"I find my time pass quite quickly enough in my own society," was the reply.

"But how is it possible for any man to like so much solitude?" exclaimed the lovely Pytheca.

"I should die of *ennui* if I were a whole day without seeing anybody."

"You do not express yourself rightly—you mean if you were a whole day without being seen by anybody."

"But who can imagine that Democritus is ever at a loss what to do with himself? Why, his whole house is filled with the curiosities which he has collected in his travels. Pardon the liberty which I take, Democritus, and let us see the pretty things you have brought home with you."

Now began the sorrows of the poor hermit. He really possessed a pretty collection of objects from the divers regions of nature,—stuffed animals, birds, fishes, and butterflies, fossils, ores, &c. Everything was new to the Abderites, everything excited their astonishment. The good naturalist was stunned with so many questions in a minute, that to answer them at once he must have been composed, like the goddess Fame, only of tongues and ears."

"Explain to us, if you please, what this is."

"What is it called?" "Where did it come from?" "How did it happen?" "Why is it so?"

Democritus explained as well as he could; nevertheless, it became but little clearer to the Abderites, or rather, they seemed to comprehend less after his explanation than before;—it was not his fault!

"Wonderful!—incomprehensible!—very wonderful!" were their perpetual exclamations.

"It is as natural as anything in the world can be," replied Democritus, coolly.

"You are so modest, Democritus! but probably you wish us to pay you more compliments upon your good taste and extended travels?"

"Do not make me more your debtor, gentlemen; I accept all your good intentions as received."

"But, at least, it must be a very pleasant thing to travel so far over the world," said an Abderite.

"And I think just the contrary," said another. "Take all the dangers and inconveniences, to which one is exposed—the bad roads, wretched inns, sand banks, shipwrecks, wild beasts, crocodiles, sharks, rhinoceruses, unicorns, and winged lions, all things which swarm in Barbary."

"And, after all, what is the use of it?" interrupted an Abderite matador; "after having seen how vast the world is, I should think that the portion I possess of it would appear too inconsiderable to afford me any satisfaction."

"But do you count for nothing the having seen so many different nations?" said the first speaker.

"And what is to be seen there? People! They can be seen at home; every place is the same to us."

"Ah! there is a bird without legs!" exclaimed a young lady.

"Without legs?"

"And the entire bird with only one wing!"

"That is miraculous," cried another; "only fancy!"

"And how does it fly with only one wing?"

"Oh! above all things, I should like to see a living sphinx," said one of the cousins; "you certainly must have found many of them in Egypt."

"But is it possible that the wives and daughters of the Gymnosophists in India, as it is related—you understand, I hope, what it is I am asking?——"

"Not I, Mistress Salabanda."

"Oh, you certainly do! You have been in India"—you have seen the wives of the Gymnosophists?"

"Oh yes! and you may believe me that the wives of the Gymnosophists are neither more nor less women than the wives of the Abderites."

"You do ~~us~~ much honour; but that is not what I wished to know. I inquired if it was true that they"—and here she put herself in the attitude of the Venus de Medici, to make the philosopher understand what she was desirous of knowing. "Well, now do you comprehend me?"

"Yes, madam, Nature has not been more niggardly to them than she is to others—what a strange question!"

"You will not understand me, Democritus. I thought I had told you clearly enough that I wished to learn if it were true that they are—must I speak plainly?—that they walk about as destitute of clothing as they came into the world?"

"Destitute!" cried all the Abderitan ladies at the same time; "why, they must be more impudent than the girls are in Sparta! But who could ever believe it?"

"You are right," said the naturalist; "the women of the Gymnosophists are less exposed than the women of Greece in their completest

dress—they are covered from head to foot with their innocence and the public respect.”*

“What is it you mean?”

“Oh yes, I understand you—it is a joke which is intended; but you only joke concerning their innocence and respectability. If the wives of the Gymnosophists are not more closely covered, they must be very ugly, or their husbands must be very indifferent.”

“Neither one nor the other; their wives are extremely well formed, and their children healthy and lively,—an irrefragable testimony in favour of their husbands, as it appears to me.”

“You dearly love paradoxes, Democritus,” said the matador; “but you will never persuade me that the morality of a people would be the more pure the more exposed the women were.”

“Were I as great an admirer of paradoxes as I am suspected of being, it might perhaps be very easy to prove to you that same by examples and reasons; but I do not sufficiently admire the practices of the Gymnosophists to act as their defender, nor was it my intention to say

* “The public respect served them for a veil,” said an old author, whose name I do not know, speaking of the Spartan maidens.

what the wily Cratylus asserts I have stated. The women of the Gymnosophists are only a proof that habit and circumstances, in affairs of this kind, decide everything. The Spartan maidens because they wear slight dresses, and the women of India because they wear none, are by no means less respectable, or exposed to greater danger, than those who enfold their virtue in seven veils. It is not the dress, but imagination concerning it, which awakens the passions. The Gynasophists consider their wives, although clad as they are by nature alone, to be quite as well dressed as the Scythians, whose wives have a tiger-cat's skin wrapped around their loins."

"I should not like to see Democritus, with his philosophy, possess sufficient influence over our wives to put such ideas into their heads," said a respectable, stiff Abderite, who dealt in furs.

"Nor I!" said a linen-draper.

"Nor I, indeed, notwithstanding that I deal neither in furs nor linen," replied Democritus.

"But allow me to ask you one thing more," whispered the cousin, the same who wished to see a living sphinx. "You have been across the world, and there must be many places wherein

everything is different to what it is here, and it must be wondrous ! ”

“ I do not believe one word about it,” muttered the alderman, shaking the ambrosial curls on his wisdom-bearing head, like the Homeric Jove.

“ Tell me, please, which of all these countries delighted you most ? ”

“ How could any one be pleased anywhere except in Abdera ? ”

“ Oh, we know that you are not in earnest—tell the young lady, without compliment, what you think,” said the alderman.

“ You will laugh at me,” replied the philosopher ; “ but if you wish it, pretty Clovarion, I will tell you the truth. Have you never heard of a country where nature is so kind as to take upon itself, in addition to its own achievements, the work of men ;—of a country where reigns an eternal peace ; where there are no servants, no masters, no poor, and no rich ; where a thirst for gold impels no one to crime, because gold is useless ; where the sickle and the sword are alike unknown ; where the industrious work not for the idle ; where there are no doctors, because there is no sickness ; no judges, because there are no disputes, for every one is content,

because he possesses all he desires ;—in a word, a country where men are as gentle as lambs, and as happy as gods ? Have you ever heard of such a country ? ”

“ No, not that I can remember.”

“ I call that something like a country, Clovarion ! There it is never too warm, never too cold—never too wet nor too dry ; spring and autumn reign there, not alternately, but, as in the gardens of Alcinous, at the same time, in eternal concord ; mountains and valleys, forests and groves, are filled with everything which the heart of man can desire. Not that the inhabitants take the trouble of hunting the hares, catching the fish or the birds, or gathering the fruit, nor have they any other trouble to obtain the comforts they enjoy. The partridges and snipes come around you, larded and roasted, and humbly ask to be eaten ; the fish swim ready boiled in ponds of sauce of every description, and the shores are covered with oysters, lobsters, patties, hams, and smoked tongues ; hares and roebucks voluntarily present themselves with their skins over their ears, put themselves on the spits, and, when ready, place themselves on the dishes. Everywhere tables rise, the cloth is ready laid, and soft

quilted couches invite you to recline on them; near to them gush little brooks of milk and honey, wine, lemonade, and other agreeable beverages; and over them, mingled with roses and jasmine, rise arches provided with tumblers and glasses, which, when emptied, replenish themselves. There also are trees which instead of fruit bear little tarts, sausage-rolls, almond-cakes, and other dainties, over which are suspended violins, harps, guitars, lutes, flutes, and clarions, which play of themselves, and form the most agreeable concerts that can be imagined. The happy people, after having slept through the sultry hours of the day, and spent the evening in dancing, singing, and lively conversation, are refreshed in marble baths, where they are rubbed with invisible hands, dried by a fire self-made and self-sustained, and perfumed with costly essences which descend in vapour from the evening clouds. Then they place the softest cushions around their covered tables, and eat, drink, laugh, sing, jest, and kiss; the night, by means of an eternal full moon, is merely a softer day; and what is the most pleasing thing is——”

“Do not talk nonsense, Democritus; you are deceiving me. All you relate is the tale about

the land of Cocaigue, which I have heard from my nurse a thousand times, when I was a little girl!"*

"But you may imagine, Clovarion, that the living in this country must be very good."

"Do you not perceive that under all this a secret meaning is concealed?" said the sapient alderman, "probably a satire on certain philo-

* [Beranger has reproduced the mediæval ideas about the land of Cocaigue in his celebrated song:—

"Ah! vers une rive
Où sans peine on vive,
Voyageons gaiement."

And Moore, in his "Fudge Family in Paris:"—

"After dreaming some hours of the land of Cocaigue,
That Elysium of all that is *friand* and nice,
Where for hail they have *bon-bons*, and claret for
rain,
And the skaters in winter show off on cream ice,
Where the fowls fly about with the true pheasant
taint,
And the geese are all born with a liver complaint!"

Some of the most pleasing of the romances and *fabliaux* of the middle ages are those which relate the discovery—alas! for a short time only—of this realm of delight.

The Germans call it *Schlaraffen* land.—TRANSLATOR.]

sophers who place the supreme happiness in luxury."

"Badly guessed, worthy alderman!" thought Democritus.

"I remember having read a similar description of the golden age, in the 'Amphictyons' of Teleclides," said Mistress Salabanda.*

"The country which I have described to the pretty Clovarion is not a satire," said the naturalist; "it is the country in which twelve out of every dozen of you wise men wish to be, and all men by all means would, if possible, arrive at,—a country which your Abderite moralists wish to recommend, if their declamations have any meaning at all."

"I wish I could see how to understand this," said the alderman, who, according to his long-standing habit of hearing with half his ears,

* Salabanda is right. A long time before the "Manuel" of Madame Danoë, Lucian had made mention of the land of Cocaigue in his true history; and before him the Greek comic authors Metagenes, Pherecrates, Teleclides, Crates, and Cratinus, had given their descriptions of it, and the way of living therein, in which they endeavoured, by the most extravagant fancies, to leave nothing for modern writers to add. The boldest particulars enumerated by Democritus are taken from the fragments left us by Athenæus in the sixth book of his "Deipnosophists."

and giving his vote in the council asleep, never took the trouble to think long about anything.

"You are fond of a strong illustration, as I perceive, Mr. Alderman," replied Democritus; "now too much light for seeing is as bad as too little. I understand 'a clear light' to mean exactly as much light as will enable us to see clearly. This presupposes the faculty of seeing, for without this, even by the light of ten thousand suns, we could perceive no better than by that of the glow-worm."

"You are speaking of glow-worms," said the alderman, as he roused himself at the word from the mental sleep into which he had been thrown by gazing on the beauties of Salabanda; "I thought we had been talking about the moralists."

"Of moralists or glow-worms, just as you like," replied Democritus. "To make it more clear, the country about which we have been discoursing is one where an eternal peace exists, and where the people are in the same degree both free and happy, where the good is not mixed with evil, where sorrow borders not upon pleasure, nor virtue upon vice, only beauty, order, and harmony are found; in a word, a country

such as you moralists would wish to see extend over the whole earth—a country where people have no stomach or digestion, or else such a country as that described by Teleclides, from whose ‘Amphictyons,’ as the fair Salabanda judiciously discerned, I have taken my description. Perfect equality, perfect contentment, and everlasting concord; in short, the Saturnian age, in which kings were not required, nor priests, nor soldiers, nor moralists, any more than tailors, cooks, physicians, or executioners, which is possible only where roasted partridges fly into the mouth, or (which means the same thing) where are no wants. This, I think, is so clear, that to any one who finds it obscure, all the light of a summer day would not render it clearer; nevertheless, you moralists are vexed that the world is as it is, and if an honest philosopher who knows why it cannot be otherwise, laughs at the anger of these gentlemen, they look upon him as the enemy of God and men, which of itself is still more laughable, but which, where those splenetic gentlemen are masters, has sometimes a very melancholy termination.”

“But what must the moralist do?”

“Understand nature a little better before he attempts to improve it,—try to be more easily conciliated, and more patient with the follies and tempers of men; to make them better by example, instead of fatiguing them with cold harangues, or exasperating them by libels; to expect no effect where there is no sufficient cause; and not to aspire to reach the top of the mountain without the trouble of ascending it.”

“No one would be so foolish,” said one of the Abderites.

“So foolish are nine out of ten of the legislators, project-mongers, schoolmasters, and reformers of the world, all over the globe, and in every age,” said Democritus.

The company, who had been only in search of amusement, now began to find the humour of the naturalist intolerable, and went home, but dallied long on the way, beguiled by the splendour of the stars and a beautiful twilight into endless reveries amongst sphinxes, unicorns, Gynmosophists, and the country of Cocaigue; and notwithstanding the variety of stupidities which had been spoken, all agreed that Democritus was a wonderful, conceited, overwise, cen-

sorious, yet very amusing and original person. "His wine is the best thing that appertains to him," said the alderman.

"Gracious Anubis!" thought Democritus when left alone, "what strange things one must say to these Abderites to beguile the time with them!"

CHAPTER XI.

A little talk about the philosophers of Abdera, and how Democritus had the misfortune to get into discredit through some well-intended observations.

It must not be imagined that the Abderites, without exception, were bound by a vow, or by their oath of citizenship, not to possess more understanding than their grandmothers, nurses, or aldermen. Abdera, the rival of Athens, possessed also philosophers—that is, she had philosophers just as she had painters and poets.

The celebrated Protagoras was an Abderite, and left a great many disciples, who, if they equalled not their master in wit and eloquence, surpassed him at least in sophistry and self-conceit.

These gentlemen had arranged an easy sort of philosophy, by which they could find without difficulty an answer to every question, and speak so fluently of all that was under or over the earth, that, as they had always Abderites for

hearers, their auditors gave them credit for knowing more than themselves, notwithstanding that the difference between them was not sufficient for a wise man to give a fig for. Certainly it was a fact, that the Abderite philosopher, except a few long and unmeaning words, knew no more about the matter than the rest. The philosophers, because they thought it unworthy of their greatness to descend to the details of nature, dealt only with propositions lying beyond the borders of the human understanding; to these regions, thought they, nobody will follow us but persons of the same calibre with ourselves, and we are sure not to be found liars, whatever we choose to tell the Abderites.

For instance, one of their favourite subjects was the question, "Why, wherefore, and wherefrom, was the world originated?"

"It began from an egg," said one of them; "the air was the white, chaos was the yolk, and water bred it."*

* To avoid erroneous conjectures being formed by those readers who have not read Diogenes Laertius, or Deslandes, or Brucker's "Critical History of Philosophy," or the compendiums of Messrs. Formeyd and Birsching, the author reminds them that all these hypotheses can boast very respectable antiquity, and have had many critics

"It originated in water and fire," said another.

"It never began," said a third; "all was ever as it is, and will remain so to eternity."

This last opinion was applauded in Abdera, it being the easiest solution of the question.

"It explains everything," said they, "without compelling a man to wear out his brains."

"All was ever as it now is," was the common reply of an Abderite when he was asked the reason or origin of anything; and he who was not satisfied with the answer was declared to be a blockhead.

"What you call the world," said a fourth, "is probably a succession of worlds, which, like the skins of an onion, lie one upon another, and detach themselves one after another."

"Very clearly explained," cried the Abderites, "very clearly." They thought they understood the philosopher, because they knew what an onion was.

"Nonsense!" said the fifth. "There are of course innumerable worlds, but they originate from the accidental movements of indivisible solar atoms, and it is a comfort if, after ten

and adherents. The opinion of our Democritus is the only one which (probably because it was the most sensible) has not produced a sect.

thousand failures, one comes forth looking so sweetly sensible as ours."

"I concede the atoms," said the sixth, "but there are no movements by accident and without direction. The atoms are nothing, or they have certain forms and qualities, and, accordingly as they resemble each other or not, they attract or repel each other. For this reason the wise Empedocles, the man who, in order to learn the true construction of *Ætna*, threw himself into its crater, recognized love and hate as the first motives of every composition, and Empedocles is right."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, you are all wrong," said the philosopher Sisamis; "never will a world arise from all your eggs, nor from the union of water and fire, nor from your atoms, nor from your *homœomerias*, if you call not the spirit to your aid. The world, like every animal, is a composition of spirit and matter. The spirit is that which gives form to the substance, and both are united, but as single bodies are dissolved as soon as the spirit, which keeps all the parts together, has withdrawn, so, in the same manner, if the general world-spirit should cease to embrace and animate all, heaven and earth would dissolve at

the same moment into a dark, formless, and inert mass."

"Jupiter and Latona preserve us!" cried the Abderites, not without alarm on hearing the wise man utter such a frightful threat.

"No danger," said the priest Strobilus; "as long as we have the frogs of Latona within our walls, the world-spirit of Sisamis will not have the trouble of bringing about so much disorder."

"Friends," said an eighth, "the world spirit of Sisamis is of the same value as the homœcomeria, onions, atoms, and eggs, of my comrades; we must have a world-maker (a demiurgus) in order to have a world, because a building requires a builder, or at least an architect, and nothing can arise from nothing, as we all know."

"But is it not an every-day expression, a thing happens of its own accord or it arises spontaneously?" said the Abderites.

"It is usual to say so," replied the philosopher, "but have you ever found that it so happened in reality? I have indeed heard Archontes say a thousand times, 'it will happen,' 'the result will be,' 'this or that will necessarily arise'; but we had to wait long enough for it—it neither happened, came, nor spontaneously arose."

"Very true as concerns the work of your

Archontes," rejoined an old bootmaker, who was esteemed by the people an intelligent man, and had great expectation of being shortly elected master of the cordwainers' guild; "but with the work of nature as the world is, it must be another affair. Why should not the world have sprung from chaos, as the mushroom springs from the earth?"

"Master Awl," replied the philosopher, "to be the head of your corporation you shall have my vote, and those of all my relatives, but you must not object to my system if you please! The mushroom grows by itself from the earth, because it is a mushroom, but a world cannot be grown from itself, because it is not a mushroom; do you understand me now, Master Awl?"

All present laughed heartily at the discomfiture of Master Awl. "The world is not a mushroom, that is as clear as daylight," cried the Abderites; "you cannot confute this, Master Awl."

"Confound it!" murmured the future chief of the corporation, "but it is always so if one associates with gentlemen who can prove so logically that snow is white."

"You mean to say it is black, neighbour?"

"I know what I said and what I meant," replied Master Awl, "and I only wish that the republic——"

"Do not forget the fourteen votes which I can procure you, Master Awl," cried the philosopher.

"Well, well,—very well ! But the demiurgus, it sounds half like demagogue, and I will have neither demagogues nor demiurgus ; I am for freedom, and whoever is a good Abderite will toss up his hat and follow me."

And with these words Master Awl went away, (the reader must remember that all this passed in a hall of Abdera,) and several idle fellows, who used always to accompany him, followed him out.

But the philosopher, as if he had not observed it, continued :—"Without a builder, or a demiurgus, or whatever name you give it, the world could not have been built ; but please to remark, it depends upon the superior whether he is willing to build or not, and let us see how he would probably proceed. Imagine, then, matter as an immense mass of perfectly formed crystal,* and the creator shattering with a great diamond hammer this mass, at one

* This philosopher was, it seems, a Cartesian before Descartes.

blow, into a vast multitude of infinitely small pieces; imagine that through empty space they were broken into *some* particular forms, and that they occupied, at intervals, many millions of square miles. Of course these infinitely diverse particles of broken crystal, thus put in motion by the violent stroke of the diamond hammer, and flying in a thousand directions, clashing, beating, and rubbing each other, produced an innumerable number of those little bodies of every kind of figure, regular and irregular, triangular, quadrangular, octangular, multifiform, and circular. From the spherical came water and air, which is nothing more than thinner water, from the triangular fire, from the others earth; and these four elements are the natural components of all other bodies in the world."

"This is wondrous, very wondrous! but it can be conceived," said the Abderites; "a mass of crystal, a diamond hammer, and a creator who breaks in so masterly a way this crystal in pieces, that from the splinters is produced, without further trouble, a world! This is indeed the most acute hypothesis that can be conceived, and moreover so simple that any one might have found it out for himself in a moment."

"I explain, by this simple presupposition, all possible operations of nature," said the philosopher with a self-satisfied smile.

"No, not even a wasp's nest," called out a ninth, named Demonax, who had been hitherto listening to the assertions of his fellow-citizens with silent contempt. "There must necessarily have been a wise design and preparation to bring about so vast, so beautiful, so wonderful a thing as this system of the universe. A perfect wisdom could alone have devised the plan, though I confess that for the execution inferior workmen might have been employed. The great creator portioned out this labour to the different classes of subaltern gods, assigning to each class its own circle in which it might work, and was content for himself to assume a general inspection over all. It is ridiculous to attempt to explain the origin of the universe, the earth, the planets, the animals, and all that is in the air and in the water, by atoms, sympathies, accidental motion, or a single stroke of a hammer. There are spirits who reign in the elements, who turn the spheres of the heavens, who form organic bodies, who embroider the spring-robe of nature with flowers, and pour the fruits of autumn into her bosom. Can

there exist anything at once more reasonable and more pleasing than this theory? It explains everything, refers every effect to a suitable cause, and by it we understand what by every other system is inexplicable, namely, the art of nature, just as easily as men understand how Zeuxis and Parrhasius can create with a little coloured earth their splendid landscapes, or those still more splendid scenes from our mythology."

"What a pretty thing is philosophy!" said the Abderites; "the only fault to be found with it is the difficulty of making a choice among so many theories."

In the mean time the Pythagorean, who had attributed all to these informing spirits, was the most successful. All the poets, painters, and other cultivators of the Muses, headed by the ladies of Abdera, declared for the spirits, but with the proviso of being allowed the liberty of arraying them in the form that was most pleasing to each.

"I never was a special friend of philosophy," said the priest Strobilus, "and for good reasons. But if the Abderites cannot leave off inquiring about the how and the why of everything, I have less to object to the physics of Demonax

than to any other; with due limitations they at least may be tolerated."

"Oh! it agrees with everything in the world," said Demonax; "that is the beauty of it."

"Shall I tell you my opinion?" said Democritus. "I think, if you are really anxious to learn the properties of things around you, you take a hugely circuitous way of doing it. The universe is very great, and from the point of view from which we see it, it is so far to its principal provinces and metropolitan cities, that I cannot imagine how any one of us can fancy himself capable of mapping out a country of which (his native town excepted) all that remains, even to the extent of its limits, is unknown. I think that before we dream about cosmogonies and cosmologies, we should do well to contemplate the origin of something within our reach—say, for example, a spider's web; and this as long as it may be necessary to find out all that the five senses, aided by the intellect, can discover about it. You will find work enough, take my word for it; this spider's web will disclose more to you concerning the system of nature, and give you more worthy notions about its creator, than all these fine world

systems that you have excogitated in your brains between sleeping and waking."

Democritus was quite serious, but the Abderite philosophers thought he was making a mockery of them. "He does not understand anything about pneumatology," said one. "Of physics much less," said another. "He is a sceptic, he believes in no original impulse, in no world-spirits, in no demiurgus, not even in a God!" said the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh philosophers. "Such people are not to be tolerated in the republic," said the priest Strobilus.

CHAPTER XII.

Democritus retires further from Abdera.—How he employs himself in his solitude.—He is suspected by the Abderites of practising magical arts, which gives him an opportunity of making an experiment on the Abderite ladies, and how it ended.

NOTWITHSTANDING all this, Democritus was a philanthropist in the real sense of the word, for he was well intentioned towards mankind, and was never better pleased than when he could prevent evil or do good, either by practising it himself or furthering it in others. And although he believed that the character of a cosmopolite bore proportions to which, in case of collision, all others must yield, he yet felt himself not the less bound as a citizen of Abdera to interest himself in the state of his country and to assist in its improvement as much as possible. But as only so much could be achieved as the sub-

ject was capable of admitting, he found, by the innumerable impediments raised against him by the Abderites, his ability reduced within such narrow limits that he had reason to look on himself as the most superfluous person in the republic. "What they most want," thought he, "and the best thing I could do for them, would be to make them wise; but the Abderites are a free people, and if they won't be wise, who can compel them?"

Consequently, since, through the before-named circumstances, he was unable to do anything for the Abderites, as Abderites, he thought himself justified in placing his own person in safety as much as possible, and in securing as much time as he could to devote to his cosmopolitan duties.

For that purpose his present residence was not far enough from Abdera, for, from its agreeable situation and other conveniences, it presented too many attractions to the Abderites, so that, notwithstanding his remaining in the country, he was always surrounded by them; he removed, therefore, some miles further into a forest belonging to his property, and built in the wildest part of it a small house where he devoted himself to retirement (the only proper element of the philosopher

and the poet), giving most of his time to the investigation of nature and scientific contemplation.

Some modern learned men—whether Abderites or not, we will here leave undecided—have advanced many opinions as to the occupations of this Greek Bacon in his solitude,—very natural ones, though wonderful enough. “He tried to find out the philosopher’s stone,” said Borrichius, “and he found it, and produced gold,” in proof of which he appeals to a book written by Democritus about stones and metals.

The Abderites, his fellow-citizens and contemporaries, went further still, and their conjectures (which, in Abderite heads, soon turned into certainties) were established on grounds as good as those of Borrichius. Democritus had been educated by Persian Magi,* and he had been travelling for twenty years in the East, had associated with Egyptian priests, Chaldeans, Brahmins, and Gymnosophists, and was initiated in all their mysteries, had brought with him a

* Xerxes, who, in his march against the Greeks, had his head-quarters for some time in the house of the father of Democritus in Abdera, was much attached to the young Democritus, and left a couple of magicians whom he had with him to assist in his education.—*Diog. Laert.*

thousand secrets from his travels, and knew ten thousand things of which never before an Abderite had entertained any idea. Did not all these put together afford undeniable proof that he was a perfect master in the art magic? Why, worthy Father Delrio would have burned all Spain, Portugal, and the Algarves, upon half the evidence.

But the good Abderites possessed still more satisfactory proofs that their countryman was a little given to witchcraft. He predicted eclipses of the sun and of the moon, famine, epidemics, diseases, and future events. He had prophesied, from her hand, to a light-headed girl that she would be a Lais, and to an alderman of Abdera whose whole life was spent in eating and drinking, that he would die of indigestion; and both events had really occurred. Besides, books with unknown characters had been seen in his study; he had been found occupied in many probably magical operations with the blood of birds and animals; he was seen making decoctions from suspicious plants, and some young men affirmed to have seen him by a pale moonlight amongst graves. "To frighten him we disguised ourselves under hideous masks," said they, "horns, cloven feet, long tails; nothing was omitted. We blew

smoke from our noses and ears, and made so stunning a noise around him that Hercules himself would have fainted through fear. But Democritus heeded us not, and when it seemed to him to have lasted too long, he only said, 'How long is this childish play to continue?'

"It is evident," said the Abderites, "that all is not right with him; spirits are nothing new to him,—he must know well how he stands with them! He is a magician."

"Nothing can be more evident," said the priest Strobilus; "we must look a little closer after him."

It must be stated that Democritus, either through inadvertence, or (what is far more probable) because he did not care very much about the opinion of his countrymen, had given occasion for many of these evil rumours; in fact, it was impossible to live long among the Abderites without being tempted to make fun of them. Their curiosity and credulity on one hand, and the high opinion they entertained of their own sagacity on the other, provoked everybody; and besides this there was no other way of being indemnified for the annoyance of their company. Democritus was not seldom in this case; and, as the Abderites were stupid enough to take in a

literal sense all he told them ironically, all the fables and absurd opinions in the world were placed to his credit, and many ages after his death were received as facts by other Abderites, or at least, unjustly enough, related on his authority.

Democritus dealt too, amongst other sciences, with that of physiognomy; and, partly from his own observations, partly from those communicated to him by others, had formed for himself a theory of it which he thought (very wisely, we believe) was to be treated in just the same way as the theory of poetry, or of any other art. For as nobody can become a good poet or painter by the knowledge of rules alone, but only those who, by native genius, long study, determined application, and continued practice, have learned how to apply them, so the art of judging by the physiognomy, of a man's interior qualities, can be useful only to those who possess great experience, observation, and discernment; to all others it can but be uncertain and deceptive, and for that reason must ever be reserved for the small number of Epoptes,* or adepts in

* Epoptes: those so called were persons who, after having passed an examination had been admitted to a view of the great mysteries of Eleusis.—See Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vol. i. p. 155 of the 4th edition.

the "secret sciences and great mysteries of philosophy."

This way of thinking would have proved to any reasonable people that Democritus was not a charlatan, but to the Abderites it proved only that he was making a secret of his knowledge, and they never ceased, as often as they had any opportunity, to tease him to reveal it to them. The Abderitan ladies were especially tormented by their curiosity; they wanted to know by what external marks a faithful lover could be recognized, if Milo of Crotona* had a very large nose, if paleness was a certain sign of being in love, and hundreds of similar questions, with which they so much fatigued his patience that finally, to get rid of them, he bethought himself of frightening them a little.

"You never would have imagined, I am

* A man of whose wonderful strength and voracity the Greeks related the most astonishing things: for instance, that he carried on his shoulders for three hundred paces an enormous fat ox, and, after killing it with a single blow of his fist, devoured it in one day. He it was who rent an oak in sunder, but was caught in the rebound. Those who wish to know how, may consult Lough's magnificent statue, a cast of which is in the Crystal Palace.

sure," said Democritus, "that virtue could have an infallible mark in the eyes."

"In the eyes!" exclaimed the Abderite ladies; "oh, that is impossible. Why in the eyes?"

"It is a fact," replied Democritus, "and, if you will believe me, this mark has often discovered to me more secrets of young and old beauties than they would have been disposed to trust me with." *

The confidence with which he said this produced some changes of colour, notwithstanding that the Abderite ladies, in all cases which concerned the common security of their sex, used faithfully to stand by each other, and they insisted that his presumed secret was a chimera.

"You compel me by your disbelief to tell you more," continued the philosopher. "Nature is full of such secrets, my fair ladies, and why should I have wandered from Ethiopia to India if my trouble had not been rewarded? The Gymnosophists, whose wives, as you know, walk about quite undressed, taught me many things."

"Give us an instance," said the fair Abde-

* This is called by Chrysostom Magnenus, in his life of Democritus, a sagacity hated by the half of mankind.

rites, "among others, a secret which if I were a married man I had rather not know."

"Ah! now we know the reason why Democritus will not marry," cried the pretty Thrysallis.

"Just as if we did not know long before," said Salabanda, "that his Ethiopian Venus made him indifferent to us Greek ladies! Now then, the secret, Democritus, if it may be told to modest ears."

"As a proof that it can be, I will reveal it to all the beauties here present," answered the naturalist; "I know an infallible method of making a lady tell in her sleep, with a distinct voice, all that she has in her heart."

"Get along with you!" cried the Abderite ladies; "you think to alarm us, but we are not so easily frightened."

"Who ever thought of frightening you," said Democritus, "by merely showing you the means by which every respectable lady may have an opportunity of proving to her husband that she has no secrets which he should not know?"

"Would your method also operate on the unmarried?" asked an Abderite lady who seemed neither young enough nor handsome

enough to have much interest in such a question.

"It operates from the tenth to the eightieth year," replied Democritus, "without regard to any circumstances in which a woman may be placed."

The affair began to look serious. "But you are jesting, Democritus," said the wife of a legislator, not without some secret fear of the contrary.

"Will you try it, Lysistrata?"

"Try it! why not?—on condition that no magic shall be brought into use, as, by the aid of your talisman and spirits, you could make a poor woman say what you like."

"Spirits and talismans have nothing to do with it; everything is done by natural means and the most simple in the world."

The ladies, in spite of all the airs of courage which they forced themselves to assume, began to show some uneasiness, much to the amusement of the philosopher. "If we were not well aware that you are a joker, and sport with the whole world—but may we ask in what the method consists?"

"As I told you, the most natural in the world; a very little harmless thing placed at

the bosom of a sleeping lady, this is the whole secret, but it performs wonders, you may believe me : it makes them speak from the innermost corner of the heart, as long as anything is to be discovered."

Of the seven ladies who were in the company, only one remained unchanged in gesture or behaviour. You will perhaps say she was old, or ugly, or miraculously virtuous, but you would be wrong in all this : she was only—deaf.

"If you wish to be believed by us, Democritus, name the means."

"I will whisper it in the ear of the husband of the lovely Thrysallis," said the malicious naturalist.

The husband of the lovely Thrysallis was, without being blind, as happy as a blind man with a pretty wife is esteemed to be by Hagerdorn ; he had always good company at his house, or at least such as was called so in Abdera. The good man thought that everybody was well pleased with his society, and with the verses which he used to read them. In fact, he had the talent of reading pretty well his miserable poetry, and because he paid attention only to his reading, he did not discern that his

hearers, instead of listening to him, were coquetting with the pretty Thrysallis.

In short, the senator Smilax was a man who had too good an opinion of himself to suspect the virtue of his wife.

"It is nothing more," whispered the philosopher, "than the tongue of a living frog, which is to be placed on the left breast of a sleeping lady; but in drawing out the tongue you must take care not to withdraw any part attached to it, and the frog must be cast again into the water."

"The means may be good," said Smilax in a low tone, "but it is a pity that it should seem rather questionable. What would the priest Strobilus say to it?"

"Never mind that," replied Democritus; "a frog is not a Diana; the priest Strobilus may think as he pleases, and, besides, the frog would not lose its life."

"May I tell anybody else?" said Smilax.

"Of course, every man in the company may know it, and every one may without fear deliver it to all the gentlemen of his acquaintance, only with this condition, that he does not reveal it to his wife or his betrothed."

The worthy Abderite ladies did not know

what to think of this matter; it appeared to them not impossible—and what *would* appear impossible to the Abderites? Their husbands and lovers were not very much easier, and each secretly resolved to try the means pointed out without delay, and all, the happy Smilax excepted, expected to learn more than they wished.

“I dare say,” said Thrysallis to her husband, with a friendly tap on his cheek, “you know me well enough not to need such a trial; is it not so, my dear?”

“I should like to see my husband entertain such an idea,” said Lagisca; “a trial supposes a doubt, and a man who doubts the virtue of his wife——”

“Is in danger of seeing his doubts changed into a certainty,” added Democritus, seeing that she hesitated. “Is that what you mean, fair Lagisca?”

“You are the enemy of women,” exclaimed the Abderite ladies all together; “but, Democritus, do not forget that we are in Thrace, and be warned by the fate of Orpheus.”

Although uttered in joke, there was some earnest in this. Of course it is not quite the thing to occasion any one a sleepless night, a design from which we cannot declare our philo-

sopher free, as he might easily foresee the consequences of his conceit; in fact, it occasioned so much anxiety to the seven ladies, that they did not close their eyes the night following; and as the supposed secret of Democritus went the round of Abdera the next day, it produced a total sleeplessness on the part of its female population for several succeeding nights.

Meanwhile the ladies repaired in the day the loss of their rest by night; and as many among them forgot that the *arcanum* could be as well applied by day as by night, and the ladies forgot to fasten their sleeping-room doors, the husbands gained an unexpected opportunity of making use of the frog's tongue.

Lysistrata, Thrysallis, and several others, who had the most to dread, were the first upon whom the experiment was tried, with the result which might easily be foreseen. But this soon re-established peace in Abdera. The husbands of those ladies, after having repeated the experiment two or three times without success, came running to our philosopher to inquire the cause of the failure.

"Really!" said he to them, "has the frog's tongue had no effect?—have your wives made no confession?"

"Not a word, not a syllable!" said the Abderites.

"So much the better!" cried Democritus; "it is a triumph for you. If a sleeping lady, with a frog's tongue applied to her breast, says nothing, it is a proof that she has nothing to say. I must congratulate you, gentlemen; every one among you may be proud of having such a Phoenix of a wife in his house."

Who could be more happy than these Abderites? They returned home as quickly as they came, and, falling on the necks of their astonished wives, suffocated them with kisses and embraces, and voluntarily confessed what they had done to be the more convinced of that virtue which (they added) they had never for a moment held in doubt.

The good women scarcely knew whether they were to believe their senses. But, though Abderites, they had the presence of mind soon to recover themselves, and bitterly to reproach their husbands for such an instance of mistrust as that of which they accused themselves. Some went so far as even to shed tears, but all had much difficulty to conceal the joy produced by this unexpected confirmation of their virtue; and though, for the sake of consistency, they

were obliged to abuse Democritus, there was not one who would not have embraced him for the good service he had rendered them. To be sure, this was not what he had intended, but the result of the joke taught him a lesson, that it was not advisable, without great caution, to trifle with the Abderites.

Thus, as all things in this world have more than one side, so it happened that from the mischievous trick which our philosopher had played off on the Abderites, proceeded a great deal more good than would have taken place had the frog's tongue operated. Husbands made their wives happy by their perfect confidence, and wives their husbands by their unwonted complaisance. Nowhere in the world were seen happier marriages than in Abdera, and, for all this, the foreheads of the gentlemen were as smooth, and the ears and tongues of the ladies as chaste, as they were—in other places.

CHAPTER XIII.

Democritus proposes to teach the Abderite ladies the language of birds, which gives rise to a curious illustration of how they educated their daughters.

It happened on another occasion, that on a beautiful spring evening Democritus was present at a party at one of those country villas with which the neighbourhood of Abdera was embellished.

“Really, embellished?” Surely, not exactly so, for when had the Abderites learned to comprehend that nature is lovelier than art, and that between making a thing artificial and embellishing it there is a great difference? But we will not discuss this further at present.

The company were reclining in a circle on a soft turf, intermixed with flowers, beneath a lofty arbour. A nightingale was singing in the branches of a neighbouring tree. A young girl about fourteen years old seemed to feel some

delight in that melody which the others neither understood nor cared for. Democritus took notice of this. The girl had a sweet countenance, and much gentle intelligence in her eyes. "Pity that you are an Abderite!" thought Democritus; "of what use is your sensitive mind in Abdera?—it can only make you unhappy. But there is little danger. All that the educational care of your mother and grandmother may have left unspoiled, will be ruined by the foppish sons of our archons and aldermen; and what these spare, your female friends will entirely destroy. Four years hence you will be an Abderite young lady like the rest, and will learn that a frog's tongue placed on the breast means nothing.

"What are you thinking of, pretty Nannion?" said Democritus to the girl.

"I think I should like to sit under those trees, and listen undisturbed to the nightingale."

"Silly thing!" said her mother; "did you never hear a nightingale before?"

"Nannion is right," said the fair Thrysallis; "for myself, I could listen to nightingales all my life. They sing with such spirit, and there is something so voluptuous in their modulations, that I have often wished I could understand

what they say. I am sure we should hear the prettiest things imaginable. But you, Democritus, who know everything, do you understand the language of the nightingale?"

"Why not?" replied the philosopher, with his usual phlegm; "and the language of other birds too."

"Really?"

"You know that I speak always in earnest."

"Oh! that is delightful. Quick! translate us something from the language of that nightingale. What was that which he sang just now, and by which little Nannion was so excited?"

"It cannot be translated into Greek so easily as you imagine, fair Thrysallis; we have no expressions in our language which would be sufficiently tender and passionate."

"But how can you understand the language of birds, if you cannot repeat to us in Greek what you have heard?"

"The birds do not speak Greek, and yet they understand each other."

"You are not a bird, but a sly man, who is always laughing at us."

"What a sad fashion it is in Abdera to think ill of one's neighbours! Your question, however, deserves a clearer explanation. The birds

do understand each other by a certain sympathy, which, under ordinary circumstances, can only exist among creatures of the same kind. Every tone of a singing nightingale is the living expression of a sentiment, and in the listener the unison of the same feeling. He understands, by means of his own inward feelings, what the other wishes to express, and just in the same way I understand it too."

"But how do you manage to do so?" asked several of the ladies.

This question, after Democritus had so clearly expressed himself, was too Abderitish to remain without an appropriate reply. He deliberated for a moment.

"I understand Democritus," said the little Nannion, humbly.

"*You* understand him, you conceited thing!" snarled her mother. "Well, let us hear, puppet, what it is you understand about it."

"I cannot put it into words, but I feel it," replied Nannion.

"You see she is quite a child," said the mother, "though she has grown up so quickly that many persons have taken her for my younger sister. But let us not be interrupted

by the babbling of a silly girl, who does not understand what she is talking about."

"Nannion has feelings," said Democritus; "she finds the key to the universal language of nature in her heart, and perhaps she understands more of it than——"

"Well, sir, do not make the foolish little girl more conceited, if you please. She is quite impertinent and snappish enough, without your encouragement."

"Bravo!" thought Democritus; "if this continued, there might be hope for the head and heart of the little Nannion."

"Let there be an end of this," exclaimed the lady, who, without knowing how and why, had the undeserved honour of being the mother of a girl characterized by feeling and intelligence. "You were explaining to us how it happened that you understand the language of birds."

It is our duty not to conceal that all Democritus had said about his knowledge of the language of birds was regarded by the Abderites as mere imposture; but this was no reason why the continuance of the conversation should be less interesting, because nothing could gratify them more than listening to things they did not

exactly believe, and yet wished to believe, such as sphinxes, sirens, sibyls, goblins, spectres, and other things in the same category, and the language of birds did certainly, they thought, belong to it.

"It is a secret," said Democritus, "which I learned from the chief priest of Memphis, on being initiated into the Egyptian mysteries. He was a tall, slender man, had a very long name, and a still longer snow-white beard, which reached down to his girdle. He looked so solemn and mysterious, in his tall pointed cap and sweeping mantle, that you would have taken him for a being of another world."

The attention of the Abderites was visibly increasing. Nannion, who was sitting rather behind, listened with her left ear to the nightingale; but from time to time, as often as her mother looked in another direction or kissed her dog, she cast a grateful glance on the philosopher, to which he responded with an encouraging smile.

"All the secret," he continued, "is this:—Under certain constellations, cut off the heads of seven different birds, whose names I cannot reveal; let the blood flow into a little hole made for this purpose in the earth, which cover with

laurel, and go your way; after the lapse of twenty-one days, return to the hole, open it, and you will find a little dragon of strange conformation, which sprang from the decay of the fixed blood." *

"A dragon!" exclaimed the ladies, with every sign of astonishment.

"Yes, a dragon, though not larger than a

* Pliny, who, in his History of Nature and Art, has mingled together in the strangest manner truth and fable, relates in chap. 49 of his 10th book, with great seriousness, that Democritus named in his writings certain birds, whose blood when mixed produces a snake possessing this quality, *that he who eats it (he says nothing about vinegar and oil) will understand what the birds say to each other.* In this, and other similar absurdities, with which, as he says, the works of Democritus abound, he has garnished his text in another part of his works in the style of a schoolmaster. But Gellius (*Noct. Attic.* lib. x. cap. 12) defends with better reason our philosopher than Pliny condemns him. Democritus could not help it if the Abderites were stupid enough to take all he said in earnest for irony, and all he said in jest for earnest; or how could he, after his death, prevent Abderitan heads from misconceiving, and publishing, on his authority, thousands of stupidities which he never dreamed of? What lamentable stuff Magnenus, in his *Democritus Redivivus*, makes him say! And what must the people of the other world suffer from what is said concerning them in this!

common bat. You take this dragon, cut it in small pieces, and eat it with a little vinegar, oil, and pepper, without leaving a bit. You retire afterwards to your chamber, sleep twenty-one consecutive hours; and after this dress, go into your garden, or into an orchard, and you will not be a little surprised to find yourself instantly surrounded and welcomed by birds, whose language and song you understand as well as if all the days of your life you had been nothing else but a goose, a magpie, or a turkey-cock.*

Democritus uttered this with so much calm earnestness, that the Abderites could not do otherwise than believe, as, in their opinion, he could not have related the story with so many details were it not true. Yet they had learned only enough to make them impatient to learn all.

"But," asked they, "what kinds of birds are to be used? Are the sparrow, the magpie, the nightingale, the raven, the owl, &c., among

* This is certainly a mistake of the translator of Democritus, as it is well known that turkeys were unknown to Aristotle himself, and unknown they must have been, because they came to us from the West Indies. *Vide Buffon, Histoire Naturelle des Oiseaux, t. 3, p. 187.*

them? What is the dragon like? Has it wings—and how many? Is it yellow, green, blue, or rose colour? Does it vomit fire?—and if touched, does it bite or sting? Is it good to eat? What is its flavour? Is it digestible? What is to be drunk with it?”

All those questions with which the good naturalist was assailed, made him so warm, that he thought the best way to get rid of them was to confess that he had composed the whole story as a joke.

“Oh! you cannot make us believe that,” cried the fair Abderites; “you are only unwilling that we should know your secrets. But we will not give you a moment’s rest, depend on it! We will see, touch, smell, taste the dragon, and eat it with the skin or bones, or—you shall tell us why.”

BOOK II.

HIPPOCRATES AMONG THE ABDERITES.

CHAPTER I.

A digression concerning the character and philosophy of Democritus, which the reader is requested not to pass over.

WE do not know how Democritus contrived to get rid of all these curious women. This example will, however, show how a mere accident might make the innocent naturalist appear Abderite enough to believe all the fables which he fastened on his countrymen. Those who reproach him with this have appealed to his writings, but long before the times of Vitruvius and Pliny a great many counterfeited books, with promising titles, were issued under his name. It is well known how common this kind of swindling was with the Greeks of the later period; the names of Hermes, Trismegistus,

Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Democritus, were respectable enough to make purchasable the poorest compositions of the emptiest heads, especially after the Alexandrian school of philosophy had brought the art of magic into great repute; and this had given to their wise men a taste for showing themselves off to the vulgar as powerful magicians who had found the key to the world of spirits, and discovered all the secrets of nature. The Abderites had given Democritus the reputation of being a magician because they could not conceive how, otherwise, he could know so much more than themselves; and later impostors fabricated books of magic under his name, taking advantage of his reputation with the ignorant of their time.

Generally the Greeks were rather partial to making fools of their philosophers. The Athenians laughed heartily when listening to their witty farce-writer, Aristophanes, who told them that Socrates held the clouds to be goddesses, that he could measure how many flea-feet a flea could leap,* that when meditating he

* Nothing is more probable than that Socrates really said something to give rise to this farcical assertion. He had only to say in some society, speaking of greatness and littleness, that it was a common mistake to

ordered himself to be suspended in a basket to prevent his thoughts from being attracted to and absorbed by the earth, &c., &c.; and it was very pleasant to them to hear the man who told them true, and consequently very disagreeable things, talking, at least on the stage, absolute nonsense.

And how badly treated by his laughter-loving countrymen was Diogenes, who of all the disciples of Socrates was the most like him. Even

describe things as large or small, without noticing the standard by which we estimate them. He might have told them, in his jesting way, that it was wrong to measure the leap of a flea by the Attic yard; we must, in order to make a comparison between the elasticity of a flea and that of a ballet-dancer, not take the human foot, but the flea foot as a measure, if we intend to do justice to the flea; and such like. Now, if there was an Abderite in the company, we may be sure he would relate this as an absurdity that had escaped the philosopher, and represent it in his own manner; and though Aristophanes was wise enough to understand that Socrates had said a wise thing, it was enough for a man of his profession, and answered his purpose of making the philosopher ridiculous, if the words of Socrates could only by a little perversion have the sense he chose to set upon them—just such a meaning as would satisfy the Athenians, who (except in taste and wit) were tolerable Abderites.

the inspired Plato and the profound Aristotle were not exempt from imputations by which it was endeavoured to bring them down to the level of common men. What wonder, then, that the man who was so mistaken as to think and talk reasonably among the Abderites was not better appreciated !

Democritus laughed sometimes, just as we all laugh, and had he been living in Corinth, Smyrna, Syracuse, or elsewhere, he would not have laughed more than any other honest man who, from principle or temper, preferred laughing to crying over the foolishness of men ; but he was living amongst *Abderites*. It was the custom of these worthy people to be always doing something at which a sensible man must either laugh, cry, or be angry ; and Democritus laughed when Phocion would have frowned, Cato have railed, and Swift have stormed. By a tolerably protracted stay in Abdera the look of irony would probably become habitual, but to say with a certain poet who liked a little exaggeration, that he was always “ on the broad grin,”* is more than any one would venture to do in plain historical prose.

* “ Perpetuo risu pulmonem agitare solebat Democritus.”—*Juvenal*, Sat. x. 33.

This report may be so much the more readily passed over inasmuch as the much esteemed philosopher Seneca vindicates our friend Democritus on this point, and even considers him worthy of imitation. "We must endeavour," says Seneca,* "to look at the follies and requirements of the multitude, not as deserving of hate, but ridicule; and we should do well to take as an example Democritus, rather than Heraclitus:—the one going amongst mankind thought proper to weep, the other to laugh; one saw in all our conditions mere want and misery, the other mere trifling and childishness. It is more humane to laugh at man's nature than to be angry with it, and he who laughs at the world deserves better from mankind than he who laments over it; the former leaves at least a little hope, the latter stupidly mourns over things which he despairs of seeing improved. He also who casting his eyes over the universe cannot restrain his laughter, displays a more elevated mind than he who cannot refrain from tears, for he shows that what appears to others great and important enough to excite the most violent emotion is so inconsiderable in his eyes

* *De Tranquill. Anim.* 15.

as to call forth in him only the most trifling and indifferent."

After having said all this, Seneca declares that it would be better, and more worthy of a wise man, to bear quietly and calmly the prevailing faults and mistakes of men, than to laugh or cry at them. I think he might find out with little trouble something better even than this. Why should we laugh always or cry always? There are foolish men and things that deserve to be laughed at, there are others which are serious enough to extort a sigh from the philanthropic; others, which would put a saint out of patience; others, which must be borne with as proceeding from the weakness of humanity. A wise and good man (*nisi pituita molesta est*, says Horace wisely) laughs or smiles, pities or weeps, excuses or pardons, according to persons, things, places, or seasons; and again, laughter and tears, love and hate, punishment and pardon, all must have their appointed times, says Solomon, who was older, wiser, and better than Seneca, with all his antitheses.

By the way, I think the decision of the sophist Seneca is right, although he would perhaps have done better not to produce such far-fetched

reasons, or to place them in such artificial juxtaposition. However, as we have stated, the very fact that Democritus was living among the Abderites, and laughing at them, makes the sin of which he is accused (however far it be carried) one of the most excusable that was ever brought against a wise man. Homer makes his gods burst into inextinguishable laughter about a far less laughable subject, namely, the limping Vulcan, who, from a good-hearted intention, and to promote peace amongst the Olympians, performs the office of cupbearer! But the allegation that Democritus deprived himself voluntarily of sight, and the reason why he did it, only prove, among those who believe it, an inclination which does little honour to their intellects. And what inclination may that be? I will tell you, dear friend, and may gracious Heaven direct that my words be not spoken entirely to the winds!

It is an inclination to take as an unexceptionable witness every blockhead, every mischievous simpleton, the moment that he lays to the charge of a great man some exuberant nonsense of which any common-place man possessing his five senses would scarcely be guilty. I should gladly believe that this inclination is not so gene-

ral as the despisers of human nature affirm ; but this at least is taught by experience, that the petty anecdotes which are circulated about great men, at the expense of their understanding, find easy credence with the generality of mankind. Perhaps, however, this inclination may not be more culpable than the pleasure that astronomers derive from looking at the spots on the sun. Perhaps it is the strangeness and unexpectedness that render those discoveries so pleasant. Besides, it happens not unfrequently that the poor people who impute absurdity to a distinguished man, think they are doing him, in their way, a great honour, and this probably was the case in many Abderite minds concerning the wilful blindness of our philosopher.

Democritus deprived himself of his sight, say they, in order to be able to think more deeply. What is there so incredible as this? Have we not examples of wilful mutilations of a similar kind—Combabus,—Origen? Well, Combabus and Origen made a great sacrifice—a sacrifice that not a few would have avoided by the loss of all their eyes, even had they as many as Argus ; but then they had a great motive in so doing. What would not a man give to save his life? And what would he not do or suffer to remain

the favourite of a prince, or even to become a demigod? But Democritus could not have so strong an inducement. The thing would have been credible had he been a metaphysician or a theologian. There are people who can spare their eyes from their business—they generally work by their imagination, and this might possibly, for anything we know to the contrary, improve by physical blindness; but who ever heard of an observer of nature, a dissector, or an astronomer, putting out his eyes in order to be better able to observe, to dissect, or look after the stars?

This absurdity is so manifest that Tertullian attributes the assumed act of our philosopher to another reason, but one which he himself must have seen was just as absurd, had it not been necessary for his argument to overthrow Democritus, and for that purpose to make him into a mere man of straw. "He deprived himself," said Tertullian, "of sight because he could not look at a woman without emotions which he felt to be excessive."*

A pretty motive for a philosopher of the age of Pericles! Democritus, who certainly never imagined himself to be wiser than Solon, Anaxagoras, or Socrates, found it necessary to take refuge in such a method! It is true that the

* Apology, c. 46.

advice of the last-named,* which was not unknown to Democritus, because he possessed enough intellect to come to the same conclusion himself, told very little against the power of love, and a philosopher who had consecrated his whole life to the study of the truth, was certainly bound to guard himself against so tyrannical a passion; but of this Democritus, at least in Abdera, could have entertained little fear. The Abderite ladies were indeed beautiful, but kind nature gave them stupidity as an antidote to their personal charms. An Abderite lady was only lovely before she opened her mouth, or till she was seen in a morning dress. To a reasonable man who was not an Abderite, she could only inspire a three days' passion, and a love of three days' duration would, to Democritus, be so little hindrance to his philosophizing, that we would advise all naturalists, anatomists, geometricians, and astronomers, to make frequent use of such a prescription against hypochondriasis, if it were not presumable that these gentlemen are wise enough not to require our advice. Whether Democritus tried the power of this remedy with any one or more of the Abderite beauties with whom we have become acquainted, we cannot, for want of authentic

* *Memorab. Socrat.*, lib. i. c. 3. num. 14.

information, decide; but that he, in order not to be captivated, or not to be too strongly captivated, by such harmless creatures, among whom he was certainly in no danger of having his eyes scratched out, should have been weak enough to scratch them out himself—this Tertullian may believe as long as he pleases, but we doubt whether anybody else will believe it with him.

But all these absurdities would appear trifling, if compared with those which a collector of materials for a history of the human understanding, although meritorious in its way, calls the philosophy of Democritus.* It would be difficult from a heap of ruins, stones, and broken pillars, brought together under the idea of being the ruins of the great temple of Olympia, to prove with certainty that these were really the fragments of that temple; but what would be thought of a man who should put together in all haste these fragments one upon the other, patching the whole together with lime and straw, and present this piecemeal work, without plan,

* Brucker, not to speak of Magnenus, who makes Democritus talk, alternately, sense and nonsense, just according to his own fancy.

foundation, grandeur, symmetry, or beauty, as the temple itself?

Besides all this, it is very improbable that Democritus ever constructed a system at all. A man who spends his life in travels, observations, and experiments, seldom lives long enough to put all the results of what he has seen and experienced into the form of a technical system, and in this respect Democritus, even if he lived more than a century, may certainly be said to have been prematurely overtaken by death; but that a man of such penetration and thirst after truth as was unanimously attributed to him by all writers of antiquity, should affirm palpable nonsense, is a little more than improbable. "Democritus," we are told, "explained the creation of the world solely from atoms, from empty space, from necessity, from destiny,—he questioned Nature for eighty years, and she replied to him not a word about her author, his plan, or his design. He attributed to all atoms the same kind of motion, and did he not perceive that from elements moving in parallel directions for ever no organized bodies could arise? He denied that the cohesion among atoms existed in the ratio of their resemblance to each other—he explained that all within the universe—the world—

existed by an infinitely quick but blind motion, and yet affirmed that the world was a whole—a complete work.”

These and other absurdities are placed to his account. Stobæus, Sextus, Censorinus, are quoted, and without taking the trouble to inquire whether it is in the category of possible things that a man of intellect, for which Democritus is famed, should reason so miserably. It is true that great geniuses are no more exempt than little ones from the possibility of error, and from drawing wrong conclusions; it must be allowed that they fall far more readily into those faults than the Lilliputians would wish to believe. But there are absurdities which only a blockhead can imagine or assert, as well as crimes which can only originate with a villain. The best men have their anomalies, and the wisest of human beings may suffer sometimes a momentary eclipse; but we may, notwithstanding this, assert with tolerable security, that he will in all ordinary cases act and speak as a man of intellect may be expected to do, and that especially when and where blockheads are collected together.

This maxim, if well applied, may save us through life from many rash judgments—many

mistakes in distinguishing between appearances and truth, some of which may produce weighty results. That it would help the Abderites I doubt, for there is just one thing necessary in the application of the maxim which they did not possess. The good people used to keep a stock of logic quite different from that of reasonable men, and many notions were associated in their heads which, but for the Abderites, would never, to all eternity, have existed together. Democritus examined the nature and observed the consequences of certain natural events, a little sooner than they; therefore he was called a sorcerer. His thoughts were generally the reverse of theirs, he lived on other principles, he spent his time alone, and in a manner incredible to them; hence they decided that all was not right in his head. "*The man,*" said they, "*has studied too much,*" and they were apprehensive that the results would turn out very unsatisfactory after all.

CHAPTER II.

Democritus is charged with a serious crime, and is defended by one of his relatives, on the ground that he was not in his right mind.—How he succeeds in allaying the storm raised against him by the priest Strobilus,—a specific which seldom fails in effect, if well applied.

“HAVE you heard anything about Democritus?” said the Abderites to one another. “For six whole weeks nobody has seen him; he cannot be found, or, if met with, he sits absorbed in thought, and you may stand before him for half an hour, speak to him, and go away, without his perceiving it. Sometimes he examines the entrails of dogs and cats; sometimes he boils herbs, or stands with a great pair of bellows before a magical furnace, and makes gold, or perhaps something worse. In the daytime he climbs like a goat the steep cliffs of Mount Hæmus, in order to search for plants, as

if he had none nearer home ; and by night, when even the irrational creatures seek repose, he wraps himself in a Scythian fur, and peeps—by Castor !—through a blowpipe at the stars.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha ! nothing could be imagined more ridiculous. Ha ! ha ! ha ! ” laughed the thick, short alderman.

“ After all, I pity this man,” said the archon of Abdera ; “ it must be confessed that he knows a great deal.”

“ But what profit is it to the republic ? ” replied a senator who by his projects, improvements, plans, and reductions of old outs and ins, had pocketed a good round sum from the republic, and on this account trumpeted forth in all societies his extraordinary share in the preservation of Abdera—although Abdera was not a hundred drachmas the richer for all his projects, reductions, and improvements.

“ That is true,” said another ; “ he spends all his knowledge on mere playthings, nothing solid ! *In minimis maximus.* ”

“ And his insupportable pride ! ”

“ His spirit of contradiction ! ”

“ His eternal reasoning, criticizing, and jesting ! ”

“ And his bad taste ! ”

"Of music, at least, he understands nothing," said the nomophylax.

"And of the drama still less," interposed Hyperbolus.

"Of lyric poetry he is equally ignorant," said Physignathus.

"He is a charlatan," * said a stump-orator.

"And a free-thinker, above all," cried the priest Strobilus, "a finished free-thinker, a man who believes in nothing, and with whom nothing is sacred: it can be proved that he has extracted the tongues from living frogs."

"It is strongly rumoured that he has dissected many while yet alive," said somebody.

"Is it possible?" cried Strobilus, with marks of the deepest disgust. "Could it be proved, just Latona! to what may this infernal philosophy bring a man! But could it be really proved?"

"I repeat it as I heard it," replied the other.

"It must be inquired into," replied Strobilus; "most honourable archon, gentlemen of

* The translator of this book recalls with pride the appellation "literary charlatan," applied to himself for writing books and lecturing on philosophical subjects to working men: the term was used by a clergyman who thought such proceedings out of the clerical sphere, and who certainly never wandered from his own in that direction.

the senate, I require you, in the name of Latona, to inquire into this matter."

"But why an inquiry?" cried Thrasyllus, one of the heads of the republic, a near relative and presumptive heir to the philosopher; "the fact is in some degree true, but it proves nothing more than what I have long since perceived in my poor cousin, that all is not so right with his intellect as could be wished. Democritus is not a wicked man—he is not a heretic, but there are times when he is not himself. I am certain that whenever he dissected a frog, he mistook the frog for a cat."

"So much the worse," said Strobilus.

"In fact, so much the worse for his head and his affairs," continued Thrasyllus. "The poor man is in a state to which we cannot any longer be indifferent; the family will be compelled to call upon the republic for assistance; he is by no means capable of administering his property; he must be placed in confinement."

"If this be so——" said the archon with a thoughtful mien, and stopped short.

"I shall have the honour to acquaint your excellency with fuller particulars," replied the senator Thrasyllus.

"What! Democritus insane!" exclaimed one

who was present. "My lords of Abdera, reflect well upon what you are doing; you are in danger of becoming objects of ridicule to all Greece. I will lose my ears if on this side of the Hebrus, or on the other too, you can find a clearer-headed man than Democritus. Be cautious, gentlemen; the matter is more delicate than you think."

Our readers are astonished, but we will assist them immediately out of their wonder: he who thus spoke was not an Abderite, he was a foreigner from Syracuse; and the reason that he was held in esteem by the magnates of Abdera, was, that he was a relative of the elder Dionysius, who had recently risen to be prince of that republic.

"You may be sure we shall not proceed further in the matter than we find necessary," replied the archon to the Syracusan.

"I am so much interested in the honour which the noble Syracusan by his good opinion does my cousin," said Thrasyllus, "that I should wish to be able to second it. It is true Democritus has his lucid intervals, and in one of those has perhaps had the honour of conversing with the prince; but, alas! they are only intervals."

"Then the intervals in Abdera must be very long," said the Syracusan.

"Noble and learned gentlemen," said the priest Strobilus, "the circumstances may have been as you state, but I must remind you that the discourse was about living frogs being dissected. The fact is serious, and I urge upon you an inquiry into the matter; Apollo and Latona demand it, and I should fear——"

"Calm yourself, reverend sir," interrupted the archon, who was himself suspected of a less devout way of thinking concerning Latona's frogs than could be wished for in a citizen of Abdera. "On the first motion presented to the senate by the Board of the Sacred Pools, the frogs shall have the most complete satisfaction."

The Syracusan immediately informed Democritus of all that had been said at this party.

"Put the fattest peacock* in the poultry-yard

* This seems to be an error in the text. The peacock was unknown to Greece before the conquest of Persia by Alexander, and long after it had been introduced from Asia into Europe, it was so rare that it was shown in Athens for money. In a short time, however, it became, to use the expression of the dramatic author, Antiphanes, as common as "*quails*." In the luxurious times of Rome they were brought to market in great quantities, and the peacock was an important dish on the

upon the spit," said Democritus to his house-keeper, "and tell me when it is ready."

That same evening as Strobilus sat at his table the roasted peacock was brought in on a silver dish, as a present from Democritus. When opened it was found to contain a hundred gold darri.*

"This looks not so bad for the intellect of the man," thought Strobilus.

The remedy operated immediately as far as was intended. The high priest enjoyed the peacock exceedingly, drank with it a bottle of Greek wine, put the hundred darri in his pocket, and thanked Latona for the satisfaction she had procured for her frogs.

Roman table. Whence Buffon could have derived the opinion that the Greeks never ate the peacock, I cannot tell; he might have learned the contrary from a passage of the poet Alexis in Athenæus. It is, however, true that if peacocks were not known in Europe before Alexander, Democritus could not have sent one to the priest Strobilus. It may, on the other hand, be supposed that the naturalist had brought a peacock among other curiosities from India; and why may it not be supposed? If necessary, we could relieve ourselves from the difficulty by means of the coins of Samos—on which Juno is represented with a peacock—were it worth the trouble.

* A Persian coin, supposed to have been first struck by Cyaxares II., or Darius of Media, after the conquest of Babylon.

"We have all our failings," said Strobilus on the following day at a great party. "Democritus is, it is true, a philosopher, but I find he is not so ill-intended as his enemies say: the world is censorious, odd stories have been circulated about him, but I always like to think the best of everybody. I hope his heart is better than his head. There may be something not right in the latter, and for my part I suspect it is so. To a man under such circumstances much must be forgiven. I am sure he would be the most accomplished man in Abdera if his philosophy had not turned his brain."

Strobilus, by this speech, killed two birds with one stone: he acquitted himself of his obligations towards our philosopher, by speaking of him as a good man, and he gained the good-will of the senator Thrasyllus by throwing a doubt on the soundness of Democritus's intellect. All which shows that the priest Strobilus was, with all his simplicity, if you like to call it so,—a very sharp practitioner.

CHAPTER III.

A little digression to the government of Shah Baham.—

The wise character of the senator Thrasyllus.

THERE is a kind of men who may be known and observed for many years without its being determined whether they are wicked, or merely weak. Scarcely have they committed an action of which a man with a little reflection would be incapable, when they astonish us with such an elaborate piece of malice, that, with all good-will on our parts to form the best opinion of their hearts, we feel compelled to bring them in guilty. We took it for granted yesterday that Mr. Such-an-one was so weak that it would be a sin to reckon his follies against him as crimes; to-day evidence equally good convinces us that he is too spiteful to be simply a blockhead—we cannot find an excuse to free him from the guilt of a malevolent intention; but scarcely have we

made up our minds about this when he says or does something to throw us back upon our former hypothesis, or at least to place us in that unpleasant state of mind which arises from not knowing what to think of the man, or, if our unlucky stars bring us into any kind of contact with him, how on earth we are to act.

> The secret history of Agra relates that the celebrated Shah Baham found himself in a similar case with regard to one of his Omrahs. The Omrah was accused of having committed an injustice.

“Well, then, he shall be hanged,” said Shah Baham.

“But, sire,” said one, “the poor Kurli has so weak a mind that it is uncertain whether he even knows the difference between his right hand and his left; he may not be aware whether he has committed an injustice or not.”

“If so, send him to a lunatic asylum,” said the Shah Baham.

“Nevertheless, sire, as he has sense enough to avoid a loaded wagon, and pass by a post against which he might otherwise break his head, because he perceives that the post will not go out of the way to pass by him——”

“Oh! does he perceive that?” inquired the

Shah Baham. "By the beard of the prophet! say not another word—to-morrow it shall be seen whether there is justice in Agra."

"Meanwhile there are people who will assure your majesty that the Omrah, excepting his stupidity, which sometimes makes him so mischievous, is the most respectable man in the world."

"I beg your pardon," interrupted one of the courtiers present, "just the contrary! All that is good in Kurli he owes to his stupidity—he would be ten times worse than he is, had he sufficient intellect to know what he is about."

"Do you not see, my friends, that in all you say there is not one word of common sense?" replied Shah Baham. "Compare your opinions together, if you please. One says Kurli is a mischievous man because he is stupid. No, says another, he is stupid because he is mischievous. Nonsense, says a third, he would be a mischievous man were he not so stupid. What can I make out of all this nonsense? Let somebody tell me what to do with him; he is too spiteful, it seems, for a lunatic asylum, and too stupid for the gallows."

"The case is this," said the Sultana Dinarzade; "Kurli is too stupid to be very mischievous, and

yet he would be less mischievous if he were less stupid."

"The plague take such an enigmatical fellow!" said Shah Baham; "here are we sitting and racking our brains to find out whether he is a fool or a rogue, and, after all, you see that he is both at once. Considering all this, I have made up my mind what to do. I will leave him undisturbed; his wickedness and his stupidity will keep each other in balance. So long as he is not an Omrah, he will do no great harm either through one or the other. The world is wide; Mashallah! let him go. But, before you do so, tell him to come and thank the Sultana. Three minutes ago I would not have given a fig for his neck."

It was for a long time a difficult problem to find out why Shah Baham was surnamed "the Wise" in the annals of Hindostan, but, with this decision before us, there need be no longer any question about it. All the seven wise men of Greece could not have untied the knot better than Shah Baham.

The senator Thrasyllus had the misfortune to be one of these (happily for the world) not very ordinary men, in whose heart and head stupidity and wickedness (as the Sultan expressed him-

self) were neutralized by each other. His designs on the property of Democritus were not new. He had relied on his cousin, after so long an absence, never again returning, and took the trouble to form a plan upon this supposition, which, by his return, was frustrated in a very unpleasant manner. Thrasyllus, whose imagination was already accustomed to see in the inheritance of Democritus a part of his own fortune, could hardly get reconciled to considering the matter in any other light. He consequently regarded the philosopher as a robber who kept him out of his property; and, what made the matter worse, the robber had the law on his side.

Poor Thrasyllus thought over many ways of counteracting these unfavourable circumstances, and thought for a long time in vain; at last he believed he had discovered, in the behaviour of the naturalist, a ground upon which to base his injurious projects. The Abderites are already prepared, thought Thrasyllus; as it was in Abdera a decided point that Democritus was insane, it was only necessary to make a legal representation to the great council that his insanity went so far as to disable him from being his

own master. This presented, however, some difficulties.

Thrasyllus, with his unaided intellect, would not have succeeded; but such worthies can always find rogues whose abilities are for sale, which is almost the same thing as having the talent themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

A short, but sufficient description of the Abderite sycophants.—A fragment in the speech by which Thrasyllus demanded a commission *de lunatico inquirendo* on his cousin.

THERE was in Abdera a class of people who lived upon the art of making all kind of wrong appear right, and giving a good appearance to bad affairs. Their chief modes of proceeding may be reduced to two—they consisted in falsifying the facts, and in perverting the law; and as the business was very profitable a great many persons commenced it, and finally the bunglers elbowed out the masters. The profession lost by this much of its respectability. Those who did the business were called sycophants,* because they were mostly such poor wretches that for a

* Sycophants, fig-eaters; a class of persons not unknown out of Abdera,—only there they ate figs, here they eat what they can get.

fig they would say or do anything that was required of them.

Meanwhile, as the sycophants formed at least a twentieth part of the inhabitants of Abdera, and as they could not live entirely on figs, it may be easily imagined that the ordinary occasions from which law-suits could arise were not sufficient for their maintenance. The sycophants of an earlier age waited till their assistance was asked, but their successors, had they adopted the same etiquette, would have been reduced to the sad alternative of starving or working. Begging was not allowed in Abdera (which, by the way, was the only thing that foreigners found praiseworthy in the police of the city).

Now the sycophants were too lazy to dig, and, in consequence, nothing remained for them but to make for themselves the requisite employment. The Abderites were very passionate in their tempers, and had but little discretion, so that opportunities of profiting thereby were not wanting. Every opportunity produced a law-suit. Every Abderite had his own sycophant, and thus a kind of equilibrium was established, through which the profession grew to be held in greater consideration, inasmuch as competition sometimes elicited great talent.

Abdera by this means won the glory of falsifying facts and perverting laws to a greater degree than even Athens itself; and this repute became in time profitable enough to the State. For then every one who had a disreputable suit of any consequence to conduct wrote for a sycophant from Abdera; and it was a very natural consequence that such sycophant never left his client until he had gained from him all that was to be gained.

But this was not the only profit which the Abderites obtained from their sycophants,—what in their estimation was the most to be prized in those persons was the comfort of being able to practise every sort of roguery without having the personal trouble of it, or coming into direct contact with the law. After having intrusted a sycophant with an affair, a man might generally be easy about the result. I say *generally*, because, in fact, there had been cases in which the sycophant, after having been well paid by his employer, had, notwithstanding, helped the adverse party in his claim. But this had only occurred when the adversary paid him at least three times more than he obtained from his legitimate client.

As for the rest, nothing could be more admir-

able than the good understanding existing in Abdera between the sycophants and the magistrates. The only persons to whom this concord was not advantageous, were the clients: in all other enterprises, however dangerous and bold they might be, there was a possibility of coming out scatheless; but an Abderite client was always sure to lose his money, whether he or his suit lost or won. Well, the people quarrelled neither more nor less on that account, but their notions of *justice* obtained so bad a reputation, as only Abderites could be indifferent to, that it became a proverb in Greece to wish an enemy nothing worse than a law-suit in Abdera.

But, through this digression about the sycophants, we had nearly forgotten that our immediate subject was the project of the senator Thrasyllus for obtaining the fortune of our philosopher, and the means by which he intended to commit this robbery under the protection of the law.

In order not to tire our readers with too many details, suffice it to say that Thrasyllus intrusted the case to a sycophant: he was one of the cleverest in Abdera,—a man who despised the common tricks of his professional fellows, and piqued

himself on being able to say that since he had carried on his honest business he had won some hundreds of the most deplorable cases without uttering a single direct lie. He leaned always upon undeniable facts, but his strength lay in combination and in "*chiaro oscuro*." Democritus could not have fallen into better hands. We only regret that, as the proceedings of the whole law-suit have long ago mouldered away, we are unable to present to young and aspiring sycophants the entire speech by which this great master of the art proved to the court of Abdera that Democritus ought to be set aside from the management of his own affairs. All that remains of this speech is a small fragment, which appears to us sufficiently characteristic to show how these gentlemen could twist facts at their pleasure; and as it will occupy but a few pages of this history, we shall lay it before the reader.

"The greatest, the most dangerous, the most insupportable of all fools," said he, "are reasoning fools; without being the less foolish, they conceal from the unreflecting crowd the disorder of their heads by the dexterity of their tongues, and are reputed wise because they rave more coherently than their fellows in the asylum. An unlearned fool is lost if he happens to speak

nonsense. But with the learned fool it is just the contrary,—his fortune is made, and his fame established, as soon as he begins to speak or to write absurdity; for the greater part of mankind, though aware that they understand nothing of what is thus said or written, either are too suspicious of their own intellect to perceive that the fault does not lie in themselves, or too stupid to remark, and too vain to confess, that they are so entirely in the dark on the subject.

“The more nonsense the learned fool talks, the louder the unlearned fools cry ‘Wonderful!’—the more busily they puzzle their heads to find sense in high-sounding absurdity; and as a dancer jumps the higher the louder he is applauded, so these clap the more in order to see the learned buffoon perform greater wonders; and so it happens that the levity of one spirit takes possession of the multitude, and that, as long as the fashion for nonsense exists, altars are erected to the very man who, under other circumstances, would be just placed without ceremony in a lunatic asylum. Fortunately for our good town of Abdera, we have not gone so far. We acknowledge and confess, with one voice, that Democritus is an original, a fantastic cha-

racter; but we are satisfied with only laughing at him—and it is in that we are wrong: now, we laugh at him, but ere long we shall perceive something extraordinary in his folly. From astonishment to admiration is only a step, and when we have commenced this, Gods! who can tell where we are to stop? Democritus is a humourist, we say now, and we laugh; but what kind of a humourist is Democritus? A conceited free-thinker, a scoffer at our old customs and regulations, an idler, whose trifling occupations are of no use whatever to the State, no more than if he did nothing at all,—a man who dissects cats, who understands the language of birds, and seeks after the philosopher's stone,—a necromancer, a butterfly-hunter, a stargazer! And now can we any longer doubt that he ought to be placed in confinement?

“What would become of Abdera if his folly grew contagious? Shall we prefer awaiting the consequences of such an evil, instead of embracing the only means by which we can prevent it? Happily for us, the laws afford us this method. It is simple, it is certain, it is right. A dark cell, most wise fathers,—a dark cell! Thus we shall be at once out of danger, and Democritus may rave as he likes.

“ ‘But,’ say his friends (for, fool as we all admit him to be, we have so far gone in the course to which I have adverted, that he possesses partisans among us), ‘where are the proofs that his insanity has reached such a point that we are bound in law to have recourse to the dark cell?’ Truly, if, after all we know, we ask for more proofs, I suppose he must take red-hot coals for gold pieces, or look for the sun at noonday with a lantern, before we shall be convinced. Has he not asserted that the goddess of love was black in Ethiopia? Has he not endeavoured to persuade our wives to walk about naked, as do the wives of the Gymnosophists? Has he not recently affirmed in a large assembly, that the sun is stationary; that the earth turns round her axis 365 times in the year; and that the reason we do not fall into empty space is owing to a magnet placed in the centre of the earth, attracting us like so much file-dust, though we are not made of iron? But I will concede that all these are trifling things; one may speak foolishly and act wisely. Would to Latona that the philosopher were in a similar case! But, I am sorry to be obliged to say it, his actions prove so great an amount of insanity, that all the hellebore in the world

would not be sufficient to clear the brain in which it has been produced. In order not to abuse the patience of the high senate, I will only cite two out of numberless instances, which can be legally proved, should there be a doubt of their probability.

“Some time ago, some figs were brought to our philosopher, which, as it seemed to him, had a strange taste of honey. It appeared to him to be a very serious thing. He left the table, walked to the garden, ordered the tree from which the figs had been gathered to be shown to him, and, after examining the tree from top to bottom, ordered it to be dug around at the root, searched into the earth in which it grew, and I doubt not also into the constellation under which it was planted. In fact, he puzzled his brains for several days in calculating how and in what form the atoms must connect themselves with each other, to give the taste of honey to a fig. He found out one hypothesis, then rejected it, and adopted another, then a third, a fourth, and dismissed them all because not one appeared to him sufficiently subtle and learned. It interested him so much that he lost his appetite and his sleep. At last his cook took pity on him. ‘Sir,’ said she, ‘if you

had not been so learned, you would have discovered why the figs smelt so of honey.'

" 'And why?' asked Democritus.

" 'I placed them, to keep them fresh, in a pot in which honey had been before,' said the cook; 'this is all the secret, and I think there is nothing more to examine into.'

" 'A pretty explanation you are giving me,' said our world-wise philosopher; 'it may satisfy such a simple creature as yourself, but do you think it satisfies me? Or, even granting such was the case, as you say, what does it import to me? Your honey-pot certainly shall not stop my investigations as to how such a thing might happen without any honey-pot at all;' and so the wise man continued, spite of his own reason and of the cook's, to search deeper after the truth than into the honey-pot, in which, nevertheless, it had been concealed, until some other fancy, coming in contact with this, led him into other, and probably still more absurd researches.

" But ridiculous as this anecdote may be, it is nothing in comparison with the proof of sense which he gave last year when the olives in Thrace and all the contiguous districts failed. Democritus had the year before prophesied, I do not know whether by geomancy or other

magic art, that olives, which were then very cheap, would be an entire failure in the following year. Such knowledge would be enough to make the fortune of a sensible man for the rest of his life. It really appeared, at first, as if Democritus was not willing to lose this opportunity, as he bought up all the oil in the country. A year after, the price of oil rose—partly because the crop failed, partly because the stores were in the hands of Democritus—to four times the value of its cost. Now I put it to all men who know that four is four times more than one, to guess what this man did? Can you conceive that he was insane enough to give the oil to the persons of whom he purchased it, at the price he had paid for it?*

* How differently this fact may be related! While it seemed to the sycophant as the complete proof of an insane mind, Pliny speaks of it as a noble action—doing honour to philosophy. Democritus was too good-hearted to become rich at the cost of others who could not afford it so well as himself. Their anxious trouble and despair at having lost so great a profit, moved him. He gave the oil, or the money he received for it, and was satisfied to show the Abderites that it only depended on himself to acquire riches if he thought it worth the trouble. In this light Pliny sees it; and, in fact, it is necessary to be an Abderite, a sycophant, or a rogue, to speak of it in the manner of our advocate.

know, too, how far the generosity of a man who is in possession of his senses may be stretched ; but this action lies so far beyond the bounds of credibility, that even the people who gained by it shake their heads and are doubtful as to the sanity of a man who looked upon a heap of gold as a heap of nutshells. Unfortunately for his heirs, they appear to be only too much in the right."

CHAPTER V.

It is resolved that the case shall be decided by medical opinion.—The senate sends a letter to Hippocrates.—The physician comes to Abdera.—Appears before the court.—Is invited by the senator Thrasyllus to a banquet, and half killed with *ennui*.—An instance that a purse full of daries has not a good effect on every one.

So far goes the fragment, and, judging of the whole by so small a part, the sycophant really deserved more from the senator than a basket of figs; it was not his fault, certainly, that the senate of Abdera did not commit our philosopher to a dark cell. But Thrasyllus had antagonists in the senate; and Master Awl, who in the mean time had become head of his corporation, affirmed very strongly that it would be acting against the freedom of Abdera to declare a man insane before he was acknowledged as such by an impartial physician.

"Well," said Thrasyllus, "so far as I am

concerned, you may inquire of Hippocrates himself; I shall be satisfied."

Did we not say a little while ago that the wickedness of the senator Thrasyllus was balanced by his stupidity? It was a silly trick to call in Hippocrates in such a dubious case, but he did not expect to be taken at his word.

"Hippocrates," said the archon, "is the best man to get us out of this difficulty. Fortunately, he is just now staying in Thasos; perhaps he may be induced to come over to us, if we ask him in the name of the republic."

Thrasyllus changed colour a little on finding that they received his proposal seriously, but the majority voted with the archon. A deputation was sent at once, with an invitation * to the doctor, and the senate spent the remainder of the sitting in deliberating upon the honours with which he should be received.

This was not such an Abderite resolution,†

* There is something about this in an edition of the works of Hippocrates; but it is, without doubt, an interpolation, and is the work of some sly Græculus of latter times, as well as the relation of the interview of that physician with Democritus, in one of the forged works which bear the name of the former.

At least, so the physicians may think who are amongst our readers.

but where have we said that the Abderites never could do anything like wiser people? Meanwhile, the reason that they paid such great honour to Hippocrates was not on account of the esteem they felt for him, but only from the vanity of being recognized as a nation who know how to value a great man. And besides, have we not remarked, on another occasion, that they were always very fond of festivities?

The deputation was ordered to say nothing more to Hippocrates than that the senate of Abdera required his presence and decision in a very important case; and Hippocrates, with all his philosophy, could not imagine what sort of important business it could be. Why should they make a secret of it?" thought he; "surely the corporation of Abdera has not been attacked by a disease which nobody is willing to divulge!"

Meanwhile he determined with the greater willingness to undertake the journey, as he had long wished to make acquaintance with our philosopher; but great was his surprise when, after being met with great pomp, and conducted before the whole assembled senate, he was informed by the reigning archon, in a most elaborate speech, that he was called over to Abdera only for the purpose of examining as to the

sanity of their fellow-countryman Democritus, and to give his opinion whether there were any means of curing him, or, if he were too far gone, to declare him, without hesitation, to be civilly defunct.

"It must be some other Democritus," thought the doctor at first, but the gentlemen of Abdera left him not long in doubt. "Well, well," said he to himself, "am I not in Abdera?—how could I forget it?"

Hippocrates did not allow his astonishment to appear; he contented himself with praising the senate and the people of Abdera very much for taking so great an interest in a fellow-citizen like Democritus as to make the state of his health a public affair. "Lunacy," said he with great seriousness, "is a point at which the greatest philosophers and the greatest idiots meet together; we shall examine into it."

Thrasyllus invited the doctor to dine with him, and was so polite as to have the most distinguished men and the prettiest women in the city to meet him; but Hippocrates, who was short-sighted and wore no spectacles,* did not

* To those who may wonder at this, the notice may be useful, that in those times spectacles had not been invented.

perceive the loveliness of the latter, and hence it happened, without its being the fault of the good creatures, who had adorned themselves for the occasion to the utmost, that they did not make the impression upon him which might have been expected. It was really a pity that he could not see better. The sight of a beautiful woman is always agreeable to a sensible man, and should she say anything stupid, which will happen sometimes to a pretty woman as well as to an ugly one, it makes a marked difference if she is not only listened to, but looked at. In the latter case, we are always inclined to see, in all that she says, only what is sensible and polite, or at least supportable. As the Abderite ladies lost this advantage with the short-sighted foreigner, and as he was obliged to judge of their beauty by the impression they made on his ears, the idea he formed was very like that which a deaf man with two excellent eyes might form about the merits of a concert.

"Who is the lady who just now spoke to that witty gentleman?" asked he, in a low tone, of Thrasyllus. The wife of a magnate of the republic was named to him; he looked at her with great attention. "Confound it!" thought

he to himself, "I cannot get out of my head that visage of an oyster-woman whom I lately heard joking with a Molossian ass-driver, in front of my house."

Thrasyllus had secret intentions respecting our *Æsculapius*. The dinner was good, his wines seductive, and besides, he commanded the attendance of some Milesian dancing-girls. But Hippocrates ate very little, drank only water, and had seen far better dancing in the house of Aspasia at Athens. He was not to be caught thus. The wise man found there what perhaps he had not found for many years—he felt *ennui*, and he thought it not worth while to hide it from the Abderites.

The Abderites perceived, without any great effort of penetration, what he took care they should see distinctly enough, and of course the remarks that they made upon him were not much to his advantage. "He is profoundly learned," whispered they to each other; "pity that he does not know more of the world!" "All that I know is, that it will never occur to me to fall in love with him," said the pretty Thrysallis.

Meanwhile Thrasyllus made reflections of another kind. "Great man as is Hippocrates, he must have his weak side. He seemed not to

care very much about the honours with which the senate overloaded him, nor is he very fond of pleasure; but I will bet that a purse of shining new darics will drive away his sour looks."

As soon as the cloth was removed, Thrasyllus began his task; he took the doctor aside, and endeavoured, while admitting the very great interest he felt in his cousin, to prove that the disorder of his mind was a thing so decided and notorious that nothing but the duty of accomplishing all the formalities of the law would have induced the senate to seek confirmation by a foreign physician of a fact which nobody could doubt. "But as it has occasioned you a great deal of trouble to take the journey, which probably you would not have done without this invitation, nothing can be more just than that you should be indemnified for the loss occasioned you in your professional business by attending here, and that by the person who is most interested in the case; accept, therefore, this trifle as a token of my gratitude, of which I hope to give you further proofs."

A pretty round purse, which Thrasyllus pressed into the hand of the physician as he uttered these words, awoke him from the ab-

straction with which he had listened to the speech of the senator.

"What am I to do with this purse?" asked Hippocrates, with a phlegm that quite disconcerted the Abderite; "you certainly meant to give it to your steward. Are you often subject to such fits of absence?—if such be the case, I would advise you to speak to your physician. But you have reminded me why I am here, and I thank you for so doing; my stay must be a short one, and I cannot delay any longer the visit which, as you know, I owe to Democritus."

With these words the Æsculapius made his bow and disappeared.

The senator never looked so foolish as at this moment, for how could an Abderite legislator imagine that such a thing could ever happen?

There are accidents for which we cannot always be prepared.

CHAPTER VI.

Hippocrates pays a visit to Democritus.—Secret history of the ancient Order of Cosmopolites.

HIPPOCRATES, as history says, found our naturalist occupied in dismembering different animals, studying their inner conformation, and the animal economy generally, in order to discover the causes of certain differences in their qualities and vocations.

This occupation furnished them with a rich subject for conversation, which left Democritus but a short time in uncertainty as to the identity of the foreigner. Their reciprocal pleasure at such an unexpected meeting was equal to the magnitude of their respective qualities; but on the part of Democritus it was so much the more lively from his having been living for so long a period remote from the society of students like himself.

There is a kind of mortals, of whom mention

has been made by the ancients under the name of Cosmopolites, and who, without any mutual agreement, without orders, without lodges, and without the obligation of an oath, constituted a sort of brotherhood, and kept better united than any other order in the world. Two such cosmopolites might come, one from the east, and the other from the west, see each other for the first time, and at once become friends; not by a secret sympathy, which is, perhaps, only to be found in romances; not because duty or oaths forced them to it; no, but because they were *cosmopolites*. In every other order false brethren, or at least unworthy ones, are to be found, but in this order of cosmopolites it was an impossibility; and I think this no small advantage of the cosmopolites above all other societies, communities, corporations, orders, and brotherhoods in the world, among which where is there one that could boast of never having had ambitious, envious, avaricious, censorious, calumniating, boasting, hypocritical, double-dealing, back-biting, ungrateful, ill-intentioned members, or of not ranking among its numbers a single flatterer, parasite, and slave,—a single pedant, false prophet, and buffoon? The cosmopolites alone could make this boast.

Their society did not exclude the impure by mysterious ceremonies or terrifying ordeals, as did formerly the Egyptian priests; these were excluded by themselves, and it is just as difficult to make false pretensions to the character of a cosmopolite as to that of a vocalist or violinist: the deception would have been discovered as soon as attempted. It was impossible to imitate the mode of thinking peculiar to the cosmopolites, their principles, opinions, language, temper, warmth of heart, or even their caprices, faults, and failings, because it was a veritable secret to all who did not belong to their order,—not a secret depending on the discretion of the members, or on their caution not to be overheard, but a secret over which Nature herself has thrown a veil. The cosmopolites might, without hesitation, proclaim it with trumpets throughout the world, being certain that no one but themselves could comprehend it. Under such circumstances it is natural that mutual agreement and confidence should be established between cosmopolites in the first hour of their acquaintance. Pylades and Orestes were not better friends after twenty years of trial and sacrifice together, than were these from the first moment that they

recognized each other. Their friendship required not to be advanced by time to maturity; it needed no such trial, it was founded on the first law of nature, in the disposition to gratify our own self-love by a love towards those who are the most like ourselves.

It would be asking from us something impossible, if not absurd, to be more explicit about the mysteries of these cosmopolites, because, as we have said clearly enough to be understood, it belongs to the nature of the thing, that to the outer world it would be an enigma to which none save the members of the order could furnish the key. The only information we can add, is, that their number was in all times very small, and that, notwithstanding the invisibility of their society, they had an influence on the affairs of the world, whose effect was the more sure and durable, as it was attained very quietly, and by means which served to turn aside the observation of the multitude. To the man who finds this a new riddle, we counsel rather to dismiss the subject than needlessly to puzzle his brains about a matter which concerns him so little.

Democritus and Hippocrates both belonged to this wonderful and rare order of men. They had been for a long time, although without

being aware of the fact, the most intimate of friends ; and their meeting had more the appearance of rejoining each other after a long separation, than of a new and growing acquaintance.

Their conversations, about which the reader is, perhaps, curious, were certainly interesting enough to merit publicity ; but to relate them would carry us too far from the Abderites, who are the avowed objects of this story. All we can say about it is, that our cosmopolites spent the whole evening and greater part of the night in a conference for which the time was only too brief, and that they forgot their antipodes, the Abderites and their senate, as well as the reasons for which Hippocrates had been sent, just as much as if such people and such objects had never existed.

It was only on the following morning, when, after a long sleep of a few hours, they met together to enjoy the morning air on a hill bordering the gardens of Democritus, that the view of the town, lying before them in the sunshine, reminded Hippocrates that he had business in Abdera. "Can you guess," said he to his friend, "for what purpose the Abderites have invited me?"

"The *Abderites* have invited you?" cried

Democritus ; "I have not heard just now of pestilence raging amongst them. There is, indeed, an hereditary disease which they all and sundry, with but very few exceptions, suffer from ; but——"

"You have hit it, Democritus ! you have hit it ! That is the very thing."

"You are jesting," replied Democritus. "Is it possible that the Abderites have an idea of what they are deficient in ? I know them too well ; their malady lies chiefly in the fact that they never feel it."

"Yet nothing is more certain," replied Hipocrates, "than that I should not have come to Abdera, had not the Abderites been tormented with the same evil of which you are speaking,—the poor creatures !"

"Ah ! I understand you now," replied the philosopher ; "your calling here is in consequence of their malady, without their being aware of it. Let me see—ah ! I have it !—I'll wager all the world they have brought you here to prescribe as much blood-letting and hellebore to the honest Democritus as he can bear, in order to make him a little more like them. Is it not so ?"

"You know your people perfectly well, as I perceive, Democritus, and in fact it requires a

very practical and experimental knowledge of their folly to speak so coolly about it."

"Just as if there were not Abderites everywhere!" said the philosopher.

"But Abderites of so high a degree! Pardon me if I cannot judge your fatherland with so much indulgence as you do; but meanwhile, depend upon it, they have not called me in for nothing."

CHAPTER VII.

Hippocrates prescribes for the Abderites.—Great and dangerous commotions which occur upon this in the great councils, and how, fortunately for the Abderite republic, the watchman all at once reduces everything to order.

THE time arrived when the physician was to deliver his report to the senate. He came, stepped into the midst of the assembled fathers, and spoke with an eloquence which stupefied his auditors.

“Peace be with Abdera! noble, firm, far-sighted, and wise lords and Abderites. Yesterday I applauded you for your solicitude concerning the health of Democritus. To-day I advise you to extend that solicitude to the whole of your town and republic. To be sound in body and mind is the highest good you can procure for yourselves, your countrymen, and your children; and to insure this is your first official

duty. Short as my stay has been here, it has been long enough to convince me that the Abderites are not in so sound a state as might be wished. It is true I was born at Cos, and reside sometimes in Athens, sometimes in Larissa, and oftentimes elsewhere—to-day I am in Abdera, I shall, perhaps, be to-morrow on my way to Byzantium;—but I am not a Coan, neither an Athenian, nor a Larissian, nor an Abderite. I am a physician: as long as there are sick people on the earth, my duty is to restore health to as many as I can. The most dangerously sick are those who are least aware of being so, and this is the case with the Abderites; the evil lies too deep for my art, and all I can do towards healing is, to advise you to send with the first favourable breeze six great ships to Anticyra. I do not care with what sort of a freight the Abderites may choose to load them outward, but on arriving at Anticyra let them be laden with as much hellebore as they will bear without sinking. Hellebore can be got from Galatia also, which is a little cheaper, but that from Anticyra is the best. At the return of the ships, assemble all the people in your great forum, make a solemn procession to all your temples, headed by your clergy, and implore the

gods to grant the senate and people of Abdera that of which they are most in want. Afterwards you shall return to the forum, and divide your stock of hellebore amongst all the citizens, at the cost of the republic, to the extent of seven pounds *per* head. Do not forget to present the senators with a double quantity, who, besides what they require for themselves, have to find understanding for so many others. The dose is a strong one, I confess, but inveterate evils are stubborn, and can be subdued only by a persevering use of medicine. After you have used for the requisite time this preparatory means, according to the prescription which I will give you, then I will hand you over to another physician, because, as I told you, the disease of the Abderites lies too deep for my skill. I know only one man within fifty miles of Abdera who could radically relieve you, if you would follow patiently and perseveringly his advice. That man is called Democritus, son of Damasiippus. Do not be prevented by the circumstance of his having been born in Abdera, for he is not an Abderite, I assure you; but if you will not believe me, then ask the oracle of Apollo at Delphi,—he is a good-hearted deity, and will feel pleasure in offering you his services,

and herewith I commend you and your city to the gods. Gentlemen and citizens of Abdera, do not despise my advice because it costs you nothing; it is the best I have ever given to the sick who believe themselves healthy." With these words Hippocrates took his leave of the senate and went his way.

"Never," says the historian Hecatæus (a witness all the more trustworthy because he was himself an Abderite),* "were two hundred gentlemen seen sitting in so strange an attitude as were the members of the Abderite council at that moment, excepting, perhaps, the two hundred Phœnicians who were changed by Perseus into as many statues by means of a glance at the head of Medusa, when their leader Phineus attempted to take violently away from him his dearly-loved and dearly-won Andromeda;" † in fact, they had all the reason in the world to be petrified for several minutes. It would be lost labour to describe what feelings passed within their bosoms, because nothing passed there at

* Unfortunately all his works have been lost. See *Recherches sur Hécate de Milet*, tom ix.: des mém. de Littérat.

† Ovid, *Metamorph.*, t. v., p. 218.

all — their minds were as petrified as their bodies.

With silent stupor they looked towards the door by which the physician had retired, and in every countenance might be seen an immense effort to understand the whole occurrence, and at the same time an utter impossibility of so doing. Finally, but by slow degrees, they seemed to recover, some sooner, some later. They looked at each other with dilated eyes; fifty mouths opened at once to ask the same question, and closed again, because they had opened before knowing what they had to say.

"I'll be hanged," exclaimed at last the Alderman Pfricme, "if the quack has not been making fools of us, with his rations of hellebore."

"I expected from the beginning nothing good could come from him," said Thrasyllus.

"He did not particularly please my wife yesterday," added the senator Smilax.

"I thought at once things would not turn out right, when he began to talk of the six vessels that we were to send to Anticyra," said another.

"And the confounded gravity with which he

did it all!" cried a fourth. "I must confess I had not the slightest idea what he was driving at."

"Ha! ha! ha! a very ridiculous affair, as I'm an honest man!" said the stout little senator, holding both his sides. "We must own that we have been fairly taken in—a decided knock-down blow; such ought never to have fallen upon us. Ha! ha! ha!"

"But who ever could have supposed it, from such a man?" shouted the nomophylax.

"To be sure, he is one of your philosophers," said Alderman Pfrieme; "the priest Strobilus is really not so far wrong. If it were not against our liberties, I should be the first to propose that we hunt all such rogues out of our country."

"Gentlemen," began the archon, "the honour of the city of Abdera is attacked, and, instead of sitting here wondering and making idle observations, we ought to think earnestly what is to be done in such a ticklish position. Before all, let us see whether Hippocrates has really gone."

An officer, who was sent to inquire, brought back the intelligence that he was nowhere to be found.

"A most abominable trick," cried the senators, with one voice, "if he has escaped us!"

"Suppose he should be a sorcerer," said the chief of the cordwainers' corporation, searching after an amulet which he used to carry about him as a security against malignant spirits and the evil eye.

Soon came the report that the foreign gentleman had been seen riding quietly on his mule behind the temple of the Dioscuri, on the road to the country-house of Democritus.

"What is to be done now, gentlemen?" said the archon.

"Yes, indeed! What is to be done? What is to be done? That is the question," said the members, appealing to each other.

After a long pause it was clear that the gentlemen did not know what was to be done.

"The man is held in great respect by the King of Macedonia," continued the archon; "he is looked upon in all Greece as a second Æsculapius. We shall place ourselves in a very awkward position if we give way, however justly, to our indignation against so great a man. For my part, I only care for the honour of Abdera."

"Pardon me, Master Archon," interrupted Alderman Pfrieme. "No one can be more jealous

for the honour and freedom of Abdera than myself, but after due reflection I cannot see how the honour of the State is compromised in this occurrence. This Harpocrates, or Hippocrates as he calls himself, is a doctor, and I have always heard that a physician looks upon the world as a vast hospital, and considers all men as his patients. Everybody speaks and acts according to his understanding, and everybody believes easily enough what he wishes to believe. Hippocrates would certainly be pleased, I think, to see us all sick, in order to have the more patients to attend. 'Well,' thinks he, 'if I can induce them to take my medicines they will become sick enough.' My name is not Pfrieme if this be not the whole secret."

"Upon my soul, so it is—neither more nor less!" cried the stout little alderman. "The fellow is not so foolish, after all. I guess that if he can, he will bring upon us all possible fluxes and fevers, only to have the job of making us well again, and to get a few fees. Ha! ha! ha!"

"But fourteen pounds of hellebore for every senator!" cried one of the oldest, whose brain, judging from his appearance, was certainly quite dry enough. "By all the frogs, it is too bad! It is easy to see that something more lies behind it."

"Fourteen pounds of hellebore for every senator!" repeated the alderman, and laughed loudly.

"And for every head of a guild," added Smilax, with a significant glance.

"I beg your pardon; he did not say a word about the heads of companies," cried Alderman Pfrieme.

"But it is, of course, understood," replied the other,— "senators, aldermen, and common-councilmen. Aldermen and senators, I do not see why the common council ought to be excepted."

"What! how!" cried Alderman Pfrieme, with great energy. "You don't see that? Gentlemen, you heard it all! Mr. Town-clerk, please make a note of it in the proceedings."

All the common-councilmen rose at once from their seats, grumbling.

"Did I not say," said the hypochondriacal alderman, "that there was something more behind the scenes? A secret attempt is designed against the aristocracy; but those gentlemen have betrayed themselves too soon."

"Against the aristocracy!" cried Pfrieme, in a still louder tone. "Against what aristocracy?"

"By Jove! Mr. Alderman, at what period was Abdera ever an aristocracy? Are we alder-

men and common-councilmen here only as figures painted on a wall? Do we not represent the people? Have we not to defend our laws and our liberties? Mr. Town-clerk, I protest against everything to the contrary in the name of the respectable body of common-councilmen in the republic of Abdera."

"We protest! we all protest!" cried the common-councilmen.

"We re-protest! we re-protest!" cried the senators.

The uproar became tremendous.

"Gentlemen!" cried the reigning archon, as loud as he could, "what hallucination has taken possession of you? Pray remember who you are, and where you are. What will the butter-women and greengrocers down below think, if they hear us crying out as if we were having our teeth drawn?"

But the voice of reason could not be heard amid the stunning hubbub. No one could hear himself speak.

Fortunately, from remotest time it had been the practice throughout Abdera to dine precisely at twelve o'clock; and according to an order of council, a sort of herald, as soon as that hour had passed, stepped before the town-hall and proclaimed the time.

"Honourable gentlemen!" shouted the herald, with a voice like that of the Homeric Stentor, "the twelfth hour has passed!"

"Silence! there is the herald! What did he say?"

"The twelfth hour, gentlemen, the twelfth has passed."

"Twelve, already?"

"Already struck."

"Now there is no time to lose."

The greater number of these gentlemen were to be guests at a great dinner.

The blessed word *twelve* raised at once a succession of ideas of the pleasantest kind, and which ideas had nothing to do with the subject of the quarrel. Quicker than the figures in a raree-show, before each rose up the vision of a huge table covered with numerous dishes, their foreheads became smooth, their noses anticipated the odour of the finest *entrées*, their ears heard the clatter of knives, forks, and plates, their palates tasted already those delicious soups in the invention of which the cooks of Abdera emulated each other. In short, the imaginary banquet occupied the thoughts of all, and tranquillity was at once restored in the Abderite council.

"Where are you to dine to-day?"

"With Polypontes."

"I am invited there too."

"I am delighted that we are to have the pleasure of your company."

"You do me much honour."

"What play will they give us this evening?"

"The Andromeda of Euripides."

"Well, indeed, that *is* a tragedy."

"Oh, it is my favourite piece."

"And what music?"

"I will tell you confidentially that our nomophylax has himself composed several choruses; you will hear wonders."

With such pleasant discourses the fathers of Abdera arose and left the town-hall, an eager, but peaceful crowd, to the great astonishment of the butter-women, cheesemongers, and green-grocers, who but a moment before had heard the walls resound with a genuine Thracian tumult.

All this was your doing, benevolent time-keeper. Without your assistance, the quarrel between senators and common councilmen, like the anger of Achilles, ridiculous as it was in its origin, would have burst into a flame, and led to the greatest disturbance, if not even to the downfall of the republic.

If ever an Abderite deserved to be rewarded with a public statue, it certainly was this herald.

It may be said that the great service he had rendered to his country loses all its merit from the circumstance that he was only accidentally useful. The worthy man little thought in mechanically calling the stated hour what mischief he was warding off the commonwealth. But it must be remembered that, from time immemorial, no Abderite has merited well of his country in any other way. It had always happened that if anything was done that proved by chance useful to the State, they thanked the gods for it, as though they felt that they were only instruments acting unconsciously and from causes over which they had no control. Meanwhile they took upon themselves the merit of the act, or, to speak more accurately, they allowed it to be attributed to themselves, just as a donkey-driver pockets the daily earnings of his donkeys, and reckons it as much due to his own exertions.

Be it understood that this is only said in reference to the archons, senators, and common-councilmen, because the worthy time-keeper, however much or however little he might serve the republic, got his sixpence a day in good Abderite money, and was thankful.

BOOK III.

EURIPIDES AMONG THE ABDERITES.

CHAPTER I.

The Abderites make preparation for going to the theatre.

THE senators of Abdera had an old custom or habit of recounting all the discussions of the council at the dinner-table, whether with company present, or only in their family circle, making them serve as a foundation for witty observations and sportive remarks, or of patriotic groans, complaints, wishes, dreams, and expectations; and this especially just when the greatest discretion was required in the matter. But at that time, although the adventure of the Abderites with the Prince of Physicians was strange enough to have deserved a place in the annals of the republic, yet at all tables where sat

a senator or common-councilman, Hippocrates and Democritus were as little thought of, or talked about, as if no such persons were in existence. In this matter the Abderites showed themselves possessed of proper "public spirit," and a much finer sense of propriety than could be expected from them, considering their obstinacy. In fact, their story with Hippocrates, let them turn it and colour it as they might, was not to be told in any way that could do them honour; and the wisest way of treating such a subject was exactly what they did—they let it drop, and said nothing.

The play for the evening constituted at this time, as usual, one of the chief topics of discourse at their entertainment. As the Abderites, following the example of their models, the Athenians, had provided themselves with their own theatre, so in all their parties, as soon as the usual subjects of the weather, fashion, news of the day, and scandal were exhausted, they began to talk of the play which was performed yesterday, or of that which was to be acted to-day; and the gentlemen of Abdera congratulated themselves, especially before foreigners, that it afforded their countrymen and countrywomen a nice opportunity for perfecting

their wit and taste, that it supplied them with an inexhaustible source of innocent conversation in society, and that it was invaluable to the fair sex as affording an excellent remedy against *cunui*, which was so destructive to the body and the mind. We do not say it in order to blame, but on the contrary in order to praise the Abderites, that they attached such importance to their theatre as to appoint a committee of the council to watch over it, whose president was always the nomophylax for the time, and consequently one of the first magnates of the place. This was incontestably praiseworthy: all that could be said against the arrangement was, that the affairs of their drama were none the better for it,—at the same time, this was no more than in Abdera might reasonably be expected. For as the choice of the pieces depended on this committee, and as the invention of play-bills belongs to the numerous class which establish the superiority of modern times over old ones, so it generally happened that the public knew nothing of what was to be performed, and this especially if a new author wished to produce a piece on the stage: the gentlemen of the committee did not make any secret of the thing, but it had nevertheless to

pass through so many wry mouths, and so many obtuse ears, that it almost always came out a *quid pro quo*; and the audience, if they, for instance, had been expecting the Antigone of Sophocles, were obliged to be content with the Erigone of Physignathus—as, indeed, they almost always were. “What are you about to give us to-day?” was the general question in Abdera,—a question which, in itself, was the most innocent in the world, but which yet, through one little circumstance, became truly Abderitish: this was because the answer could not be of any practical use, for the people always went to the play, whether the piece was old or new, good or bad. Properly speaking, there were no *bad* pieces for the *Abderites*, because they accepted everything as good; and a natural consequence of this unbounded good-nature was, that there were no *good* pieces for them. Bad or good, if they were amused, all was right, and anything looking like a play did amuse them.

Every piece, however miserably deficient and badly performed, terminated amidst applause, which seemed as though it would never leave off; and when the question ran through the theatre—“Have you been pleased with the play?”—the invariable reply was, “Yes, indeed.”

However inclined our readers may be to look without wonder on any of the peculiarities of this Thracian Athens, yet the fact just related is so strange that it can hardly claim belief without some explanation. That the Abderites, with all their taste for the drama, should have brought themselves to so complete a state of apathy, or rather indifference, that a bad piece should not only occasion them no displeasure, but should be as acceptable to them, or nearly so, as a good one, is almost too much for credence.

We must take advantage of the need of solving this riddle to make a digression on the whole history of the drama among the Abderites; but before this we must ask the reasonable and right-thinking reader a little favour, the granting of which will in the end be a matter of more advantage to him than to ourselves, and this is, in spite of inward suggestions to the contrary, not to imagine that we allude, under feigned names, to the dramatic authors, the actors, or the audience of his beloved fatherland. It is true, and we do not deny it, that all the Abderite story, to a certain extent, has a double meaning; but without the key to this secret intention, which our readers must obtain

from ourselves, they would every moment be in danger of making false interpretations. Till then we must ask them,

"Per genium, dextramque, Deosque Penates,"

to avoid making any ungenerous or unfriendly application, and in all that follows, as well as throughout the book, not to read in a different state of mind from that in which they would read any other old or new; but impartial, historical relation.



CHAPTER II.

Exacter notices concerning the Abderite national theatre.—Taste of the Abderites.—Character of the nomophylax Gryllus.

WHEN the Abderites resolved to have a permanent theatre, it was decided, from patriotic feelings, that it should be a national one. Now, as the nation, at least the majority, consisted of Abderites, their theatre was necessarily an Abderite one, and this was the first and irremediable cause of all sorts of evil.

The respect which the Abderites professed for the holy city of Minerva, as their reputed mother, involved as a necessary consequence that all Athenian dramas should be held in high estimation, not merely because they were good, which indeed was not always the case, but because they came from Athens. At first, for want of a sufficient number of home-made

pieces, scarcely anything else was represented ; but just for this reason, not only for the honour of the town and republic of Abdera, but for several other motives, it was thought necessary to erect in the midst of their own city a manufactory of comedies and tragedies, and to encourage by all possible means this poetry-spinning, by means of which all the Abderite wit, feelings, customs, and follies, as so many rough natural products, should be dramatically worked up for their own use, as was becoming to good and wise rulers and patriots. To do this out of the public chest was impossible, for two reasons—first, because there was very little in it, and secondly at that time it was not the fashion to make the spectators pay, but the State was obliged to defray the cost, and had outlay sufficient without this addition. To tax the inhabitants further without knowing beforehand how they would relish this new amusement or not, was a thing not to be imagined. There remained no other way than that of encouraging Abderite authors at the expense of the common taste, and the authorities therefore accepted as good every production that was tendered gratis, following the old proverb, “not to look a gift horse in the mouth,” or, as the Abderites used to

say, "When there is eating for nothing there is always good cooking."

What Horace says about Rome in his time—

"Scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim"—

might be said in a superlative sense of the Abderites. It was considered a meritorious thing to write a play, and in so doing there was really nothing to risk. Everybody wrote tragedies who had only wit enough to string together some score of thoughts in an equal number of bombastic periods, and every common jester tried his hand at exposing on the stage the failings of the Abderites, of which he in society and at public places set forth a manifest example in himself.

This patriotic toleration of national productions had the effect of increasing the evil and rendering it permanent.

However thoughtless, boastful, silly, unprincipled, ignorant, and idle, the young patricians were in Abdera, one or other of them was perpetually prevailed on by his favourite, his parasite, or his own hereditary stupidity, to imagine that he could earn dramatic laurels as well as another; and his first essay was always crowned with so much success, that Blemmias, nephew of the archon Onolaus, a youth of

seventeen and (a thing not uncommon in the family) a notorious simpleton, felt an unaccountable itching in his fingers to write a *goat-play*, as at that time the thing was called to which the name of *tragedy* is now applied.

Never since Abdera stood on Thracian ground, never was seen a more stupid native production; but the author was a nephew of the archon, and therefore he could not fail. The pit, or arena, was so crowded that young gentlemen were obliged to take upon their knees the loveliest of the Abderite beauties. The common people stood on each other's shoulders. The five acts were listened to in stupid, unbroken silence. There were yawning, sighing, wiping of the forehead, rubbing of the eyes, and unspeakable weariness; but it *was* listened to, and when the long-desired conclusion arrived, it was greeted with such thunders of applause that several rather delicate and nervous gentlemen lost their hearing altogether.

Now it is quite clear that it was not so very difficult to write a tragedy, since the young Blemmias had achieved one. Everybody, without great presumption, might suppose himself equal to the task; so it became a point of honour that every respectable family should boast of at

least one son or nephew, or brother-in-law, or other relative, who had bequeathed a goat-play or a comedy to the national stage, or at least an opera. It was not thought necessary to inquire into the real merits of the piece; good, indifferent, and bad, ran together in the same category. No cabal was necessary to uphold a bad piece—one politeness answered to another; and as the gentlemen were all in the same predicament, nobody bethought himself of whispering to his neighbour that “King Midas had the ears of an ass.”

It is easy to comprehend that the dramatic art could not gain much by this tolerance; but why should the Abderites trouble themselves about the interests of the art? It was sufficient that similar productions passed off quietly, to the tranquillity of the State and the general amusement of the interested parties. “It may thus be seen,” the archon would say, “how important it is to take a thing by its right end. Dramatic affairs, which are almost always giving rise to the most shameful quarrels in Athens, become in Abdera a bond of union and a source of the most innocent pastime in the world, People go to the play, amuse themselves in one way or another, either listening to it, or in conversation, or in sleeping, as the case may be.

Afterwards comes the applause, and everybody goes home satisfied; and then, 'Good night!'

We have already mentioned that the Abderites were so occupied with their theatre, that it was nearly the only subject of conversation in their parties, and so it was; but if they talked of dramatic pieces, or performances, or actors, it was not to examine what ought to be applauded or otherwise, because they made it depend upon their own will or caprice whether a thing were good or not, and, as has been remarked, they had come to a mutual though tacit agreement to encourage their homebred national dramatic manufacture.

"It is clearly perceptible," said they, "how important are the results where the arts are encouraged. But twenty years ago we had only two or three poets, who, except on birthdays or weddings, are not noticed by anybody now; within the twelve years that we have had our own theatre, we can produce more than six hundred pieces, great and small together, which sprang up on Abderite ground."

When they conversed of their plays, it was only to question each other thus:—"Whether yesterday's piece were not pretty;" and to reply thus:—"Yes, it was very nice; and what a

beautiful dress the actress wore who personated Iphigenia, or Andromeda!"—because in Abdera the female characters were represented by women (not so Abderitish a custom after all), and this served as a foundation for thousands of interesting observations, discourses, and replies, upon the dress, voice, demeanour, motion, carriage of the head, and twenty other things of the same kind. In the same way they talked of the operas, as well of the music as of the "words": such was the term applied to the poetry. One stated what it was that had pleased him best; the most sublime and stirring passages were discussed; there was fault found here and there with a low expression or exaggerated sentiment, but the critic always finished with the eternal Abderite chorus, "It was nevertheless a pretty piece;" while the short stout senator would occasionally add,— "And it contains a very good moral—a beautiful moral;"—only it happened unfortunately that the pieces which he praised for their morality were generally the worst of all.

It will be thought, perhaps, the special reason why pieces of home manufacture were so much encouraged in Abdera, without regard to merit or quality, did not apply to foreign ones; that

the great difference among the Athenian dramatic authors, and the distance at which an Acydamus stood from a Sophocles, might have served to form the taste of the Abderites, and enabled them to distinguish between the bad and the good, the excellent and the barely tolerable; above all, between a powerful and natural genius and mere pretensions and apish imitation, between the equal, regular march of a true master, and the stilted steps of an imitator. But, in the first place, taste cannot be acquired without a certain delicacy of that organ of the mind (perception) by which it must be tested, and which, we have already observed at the commencement of this story, nature seemed to have altogether refused to the Abderites. To them everything was good; on their tables might be found the masterpieces of wit and genius, together with the commonplaces of the most wretched bunglers. They could be imposed upon in every way, and nothing was more easy than to palm upon an Abderite the sublimest ode of Pindar as the attempt of a beginner, and, on the contrary, the most nonsensical scribbling in the shape of a song, with strophe and antistrophe, for the work of Pindar. For this reason, the same question was asked concern-

ing every new drama which was placed before them, "By whom?"—and there were a thousand instances of their remaining indifferent to a most excellent work, until they learned that it was connected with a celebrated name.

It must be added that the nomophylax Gryllus, son of Cyniscus, who took the leading part in the erection of the Abderite national theatre, and was the head inspector of their theatrical board, thought himself a great *connoisseur* in music, and the first composer of his time,—a claim against which the Abderites had nothing to say, as he was a very popular man, and all his compositions consisted of melodies which could be adapted to every kind of text, and consequently nothing could be more easy than to sing and commit them to memory. Facility in composing was the quality of which Gryllus was especially proud.

"Well, how do you like my Iphigenia, Hecuba, Alcestis (or whatever else it was), eh?"

"Oh! delightful! Mr. Nomophylax—admirable! It is a pure composition, flowing, melodious."

"And how long do you think I have worked at it?—do count, please. To-day is the 13th; on the 4th, at five o'clock (you know I am an

early riser), I sat down to my desk, and yesterday, exactly at ten o'clock in the morning, I put the finishing stroke to it. Well, now, do reckon:—4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th—it makes out, as you see, not quite nine full days, and among them two council-days, and two or three in which I had dinner engagements, without taking into account other business. Hem! what say you to that?—is it not smart work? I do not mention it for praise, but I am satisfied that, for a wager, no composer in European or Asiatic Greece could be prepared with a piece sooner than myself. That is nothing—but it is my own peculiar talent, eh?"

We expect our readers can see the man before them, and if they have any talent for music they will comprehend his Iphigenia, Alcestis, or Hecuba, as well as though he had played them all through on a hand-organ. But, besides this little weakness, this great man was possessed with the idea that the only good music to be found was his own. Not one of the best composers of Athens, Thebes, Corinth, &c., &c., could come near him, in his own opinion; even Damon himself, whose graceful, spirited, and heart-stirring productions bewitched every

one who had any soul (except in Abdera)—even Damon was described by him as a street-singers' composer. With this mode of thinking, and by the infinite facility with which he poured forth his musical inspirations, he had within a few years set to music more than sixty pieces of the Athenian drama, celebrated or uncelebrated; he left the Abderite national pieces mostly to his pupils and imitators, and contented himself with giving the finishing touch to their work. It is true that his choice, as may be imagined, fell not always on the best dramas. Most of those he selected were bombastic caricatures of Æschylus, common farces, or show-pieces which were intended by their authors for the amusement of the lowest of the populace. But it was enough that the nomophylax, a chief man of the State, had composed the music: they were infinitely applauded, and though, by their frequent repetition, the jaws of the audience were almost dislocated with yawning, yet they never failed to assure each other, on going out of the theatre, that it was indeed a beautiful play, and delightful music.

And thus everything combined to produce an indifference, not only as to the variety and shades of beauty, but as to the positively good

or bad, by which, as a strong national characteristic, these Thracian Athenians distinguished themselves from all other polished nations of the earth,—an indifference which was the more remarkable, as it still left them the faculty of being struck in a very strange way by the really beautiful, as will be seen shortly by a remarkable example.

CHAPTER III.

Contributions to the literary history of Abdera.—Notice concerning their first dramatic authors, Hyperbolus, Paraspasmus, Antiphilus, and Thlapy.

WITH all this indifference, tolerance, apathy, or whatever we please to call it, we must not imagine that the Abderites were a people wholly devoid of taste: they really possessed their five senses, and notwithstanding that under the above circumstances everything was pleasant to them, they still found that one thing pleased them more than another; so they had their favourite plays and favourite authors, just the same as other people:

At the time that the little vexation about Dr. Hippocrates overtook them, there were amongst the pretty large number of dramatic authors who made a trade of it, without taking

into account the volunteers, two particularly who possessed the favour of the Abderite public. One of these wrote tragedies, and a kind of pieces called comic operas; the other, whose name was *Thlaps*, a sort of intermediate affair, at which nobody could either laugh or cry,—dramas which he had the honour of inventing, for which reason they were called by his admirers *Thlapsodies*.

The first alluded to was Hyperbolus, of whom it has already been mentioned at the beginning of this true and delectable history, that he was the most celebrated author in Abdera. He was also distinguished in other matters. The extraordinary partiality of his fellow-citizens for him awarded to him in every possible way the prize of pre-eminence, which distinction obtained for him the pompous name of Hyperbolus, his family name being Hegesias. The reason that this man found such high favour with the Abderites, was naturally enough the very one why he and his works would have been hissed everywhere else. He, amongst all authors, was the one in whom appeared the true spirit of Abdera, with all its idiotisms, and freedom from the beauties, proportions, and traits of ordinary human nature. He was the poet

with whom all his fellow-citizens sympathized the most, who acted always just as they would have done, whose very speeches resembled their own, who always found the very point which would amuse and tickle them—in a word, an author after their minds and hearts; and this not because he possessed any extraordinary sagacity, or because he made this the object of his study, but simply because amongst all his comrades he was the truest Abderite. It might be depended on that the point of view from which he regarded a thing would be the worst, and that he perceived a likeness just where the difference was the most palpable to others; that he always endeavoured to look solemn where a sensible man laughed, and laughed when all but an Abderite would think only of mourning. A man who was so deeply imbued with the Abderitan genius, could of course in Abdera do whatever he liked. He was, too, their Anacreon, their Alcæus, their Pindar, their Æschylus, their Aristophanes, and had lately been working at a grand national epic, in forty-eight books, to be called "*The Abderiad*," to the great joy of the whole Abderite people, "because," said they, "we only want a Homer, and when Hyperbolus is ready with his *Abderiad*, we shall have in one

piece both the Iliad and the Odyssey; and then let the other Greeks come and look over our shoulders, if they dare. They will not attempt after this to show us a man whose equal could not be found amongst ourselves."

In the mean time, however, tragedy was the principal department of Hyperbolus; he had constructed altogether, large and small, about a hundred and twenty dramas, a circumstance which, among a people who judged of all things by the number and the size, constituted in itself a reason for their extraordinary preference, because amongst all his rivals not one could exhibit a third part of this number. Notwithstanding that he was called by the Abderites, from the bombast of his style, their Æschylus, he piqued himself not a little on his originality. "Point me out in all my works," said he, "a character, an idea, a sentiment, an expression, which is taken from another!"

"Or from nature!" added Democritus.

"Oh! I grant you that," cried Hyperbolus; "and I do not think I have lost a great deal by it. Nature! nature!—men are always talking about this *nature*, without knowing what they mean. *Human nature* (and that is what you are speaking of) belongs to comedies, farces, thlap-

sodies, and the like! But tragedy must step beyond *nature*, or I would not give a fig for it!" This was the quality of his own works, and there could be no mistake about it.

No man ever looked like *his* personages, or spoke, felt, thought, or acted like them; but then this was just what delighted the Abderites, and why they esteemed Sophocles less than any other foreign poet.

"If I might give my opinion frankly," said Hyperbolus one day in a highly respectable party, where this subject was discussed in a truly Abderite manner, "I never could conceive what there is to be found so extraordinary in the *Cedipus* or in the *Electra* of Sophocles, and especially in his *Philoctetes*. As a successor of so sublime an author as *Æschylus*, he certainly falls off strangely. As to Attic polish I do not deny it to him—polish as much as you like! But where are the flashes of fire, the lightning thoughts, the thunderbolts, the overwhelming whirlwind—in short, the giant's strength, the eagle's flight, the lion-like force, the storms and hurricanes, which distinguish the true tragic author—where are they?"

"This may be called speaking of a thing like a master of the subject," said one of the party.

“Oh! for such matters, you may rely on the judgment of Hyberbolus!” cried another.

“How should he help understanding it? He has written a hundred and twenty tragedies—he is the dramatic author of Abdera,” whispered a fair Abderite to a foreigner.

In the mean time, two among his rivals, pupils, and imitators, succeeded in shaking the tragic throne on which he had been placed by general acclamation:—one by a piece in which the hero, in the first act, murders his father; in the second, he marries his sister; in the third, discovers that she is the offspring of his incestuous intercourse with his own mother; in the fourth, he cuts off his own ears and nose; and in the fifth, after having poisoned his mother and strangled his sister, he is carried away by the Furies amidst thunder and lightning to Tartarus;—the other by a Niobe, in which, besides a great amount of “oh, oh’s!” “pew, pew’s!” and “hellelilleleus!” and some blasphemies which make the hair of the hearers stand on end, the whole play is performed in action and pantomime. Both pieces produced the most stupendous effect: never since the existence of Abdera had so many handkerchiefs been steeped in tears as during these three hours.

"No—I cannot bear it any longer!" sobbed the beautiful Abderites.

"The poor prince—how he howled! how he threw himself about! how he writhed!"

"And the speech he made after having cut off his nose!" cried another.

"And the Furies—the Furies!" exclaimed another; "I could not close my eyes for a month after that."

"It was dreadful, I must confess," said a fifth. "But oh! the Niobe! how she stands amidst all her children, piled one upon another, tearing her hair and scattering it over the weltering bodies, then throwing herself upon them, hoping to recall them to life, then again rising in despair, rolling her eyes so wildly, then tearing her bosom and flinging hands full of blood towards the sky, uttering horrible maledictions against heaven! No—I never saw anything more moving. What a man must this Paraspasmus be to have the power to produce such scenes on the stage!"

"Well, as for the power," said the fair Salabanda, "we are not always to conclude from such evidence. I doubt whether Paraspasmus could keep up to all he seems to promise: great braggarts are bad fighters."

The beautiful Salabanda was a woman who did not say such things without a reason. This simple observation influenced the second performance so much, that it did not produce half its former effect, and the author could never recover the blow which Salabanda gave him in the imagination of the Abderite ladies.

In the mean time, he attained the honour, as well as his friend Antiphilus, of having given a new direction to the tragic drama of Abdera, by the discovery of two new modes of representing it, viz. the grisly and the pantomimic, by which means a new arena was opened to the Abderite authors, who were sure to earn laurels, for in fact nothing was more easy than to frighten children, and to make their heroes say—nothing at all.

As human inconsistency becomes satiated with everything,* even with what at first pleases it the most, so the Abderites began to feel *ennui* at hearing and admiring every day what had long ceased to amuse them. Just at that time a young author of the name of Thlaps bethought himself of bringing out pieces on the stage which were neither comedies, nor tragedies, nor farces, but living family pictures of Abderites,—in which neither heroes nor gods, but good,

respectable, homebred citizens appeared, attending to their every-day town, market-house, and family business, acting and speaking before a respectable audience, just as if they were simply on the stage of their own houses, and as if, besides themselves, no one existed in the world. It was nearly the same kind of play by which Menander subsequently gained so much glory. The difference consisted in this only, that the one brought Athenians, and the other Abderites, upon the stage, and that the one was Menander, and the other Thlaps. His first piece* of this kind was received with so much enthusiasm, that the like was never witnessed before: the worthy Abderites beheld themselves on the stage for the first time without caricature, without stilts, without the lion-skin sceptre or diadem, but in their usual costume, speaking their usual language, living, loving, eating and drinking, pleasing and being pleased, &c., in their real natural fashion and manner—and this is just what gave them so

* He called it "Eugamia, or the Fourfold Bride." Eugamia was promised by her father to one, by her mother to another, and by her aunt (on whose fortune she counted) to a third. Finally it appeared that the forward girl had secretly engaged herself to a fourth.

much pleasure. It was to them just as to a young girl is the seeing her face for the first time in a looking-glass—they could not have enough of it. “The Fourfold Bride” was performed fourteen times in succession, and for a long time the Abderites would hear nothing but thlapsodies. Thlaps, to whom composition was not so easy as to the great Hyperbolus, and to the nomophylax Gryllus, could not prepare them fast enough, but as he had given the ton to his fellow-townsmen, rivals were not wanting; all applied themselves to this new variety, and in less than three years all subjects and titles of thlapsodies were so much exhausted, that it was pitiable to see the woful condition of authors, as they panted and perspired to obtain from the mire which so many had spouted before them one single drop of muddy water.

The natural consequence was, that imperceptibly the respective authors regained their proper equilibrium. The Abderites also, who, just like other human beings, possessed a natural taste for variety, soon discovered that it would be better to preserve themselves from *ennui* by a change. Tragedies both grisly and pantomimic, comedies, operas, and farces, again came into vogue. The nomophylax composed the

tragedies of Euripides, *i. e.* set them to music, and Hyperbolus renewed his project of becoming the Abderite Homer, partly because he had made up his mind, however unwillingly, to divide the favour of the Abderite pit with Thlaps, and partly because the latter, by his marriage with the daughter of a rich common-councilman, had lately become a very important personage.

CHAPTER IV.

Remarkable instance of political economy of the Abderites.—End of the digression concerning their theatrical affairs.

BEFORE we quit this digression and continue our story, it will be necessary to remove a little doubt which may arise in the mind of our kind reader from this description of the Abderite theatre.

It is inconceivable, one might say, how the budget of Abdera, whose revenue was never considerable, could meet the exorbitant expenses of a daily performance at the theatre, presuming even that the authors gave their services without fee or reward. And yet, unless something of this kind had been the case, we can hardly understand that there should have been in Abdera so many dramatic authors by profession, and that the great Hyperbolus himself should

have brought on the stage no fewer than one hundred and twenty plays.

- In order not to keep our reader in suspense without necessity, we will at once confess to him that the Abderite dramatists worked by no means for nothing, as the great law, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn," is a natural law, and its general obligation was felt even by the natives of Abdera; and though by a special decree the state treasury was not to pay any expenses of the theatre, yet, for the most part, these were defrayed by parsimony in other and more useful departments.

The thing was thus:—as soon as the patrons of the theatre remarked that the Abderites were inflamed with a passion for the drama, and that theatrical representations had become a necessity for them, they set forth to the people, by a representation from the common council, that the treasury was unable to support this addition to its expenses without a new tax, or the suppression of some other expenses. A committee was accordingly appointed, who, after more than sixty sittings, at last presented to the council a project for the regulation of the public theatre, which was thought to be so sound and

well devised, that it was at once confirmed as an Abderite law, at a general meeting of the citizens.

It would give us pleasure to place before the eyes of our readers this Abderite masterpiece, if we could suppose they would have patience enough to peruse it; but should any person or corporation, in or out of the holy Roman empire, wish for the communication, we beg of them to make a regular request to that effect, defraying at the same time all the requisite expenses. All we can say here is, that according to this regulation enough money was collected, without oppression towards the public, to entertain the Abderites with plays four times a week, and not only to remunerate authors, actors, and orchestra, but also the honourable deputies and the nomophylax, and besides this to gratify the two lower classes of spectators, at every performance, with a penny loaf each and two dried figs. The only defect in this regulation was, that the gentlemen of the committee, in drawing up the account of the expenses and the profits (which was received by the State with a perfect reliance on its correctness), made a little mistake of about 28,000 drachmas (rather more than £1000 of our money), which would have to be

paid from the public treasury, the destined funds not being sufficient. It was indeed no trifling error in reckoning! In the mean time the gentlemen of Abdera were so accustomed to go on smoothly, and *bonâ fide*, in the business of the public treasury, that many years elapsed before they discovered that this thousand per annum had been abstracted from their state purse, more than they had expected. When it was finally, with great trouble, discovered, the heads of the republic found it necessary to lay the affair before the assembled people, and, *pro formâ*, propose the suppression of the stage. But the Abderites behaved in this matter as they would have done had it been intended to deprive them of fire and water. In short, a law was enacted, that the sum yearly required should be taken from the public treasure deposited in the Temple of Latona, and that, in future, he who should be bold enough to propose the suppression of the stage, should be declared an enemy to the city of Abdera.

Now the Abderites, thinking they had settled all for the best, used to boast before foreigners that their drama cost eighty talents without a call upon the citizens. "All arises from a

good regulation," said they, "by which means we have a national theatre which has no equal in the world."

"That is a great truth," said Democritus; "such authors, such performers, such music—and four times a week—for eighty talents! I for my part, have never found such in any place in the world."

After all they had something to show for it, since it was allowed on all hands that their theatre was one of the most elegant in all Greece. It is true that they had been obliged to pledge their revenues to the King of Macedon, to be enabled to build it; but no one could object to this, as the king had consented that the superintendent, secretaries, and collectors, should be all and for ever Abderites.

We apologize for having detained our readers so long with this general notice of the Abderite theatre. It has just struck six o'clock, and we are going directly to the building itself, where they will be pleased to place themselves either beside the short, stout senator, or the priest Strobilus, or the wit Antistresiades, or any one of the fair Abderite ladies to whom they were introduced in a former chapter.

CHAPTER V.

The Andromeda of Euripides is performed.—Great success of the nomophylax, and how the *prima donna* contributed towards it.—A few remarks upon the other actors.—The choruses and the decorations.

THE drama which was this evening to be represented was the Andromeda of Euripides, one of the sixty or seventy works of that poet of which only a few, with the exception of some small fragments, have escaped destruction. The Abderites paid great respect, without knowing why, to the name of Euripides, and to all the works that bore it. Several of his tragedies, or dramas as we should properly call them, had been performed, and were always pronounced exceedingly beautiful. The Andromeda, one of the newest, was now for the first time acted on the Abderite stage. The nomophylax

composed the music to it, and (as he whispered pretty loudly in the ears of his friends) had on this occasion surpassed himself. Perhaps the good man had it in his mind to display all his skill at once, and thus the meaning of the worthy Euripides had entirely escaped his attention. Gryllus, however, was satisfied with himself,—unconcerned whether his music changed the text, or the text his music, into nonsense, which was just the point about which the Abderites cared the least. In short it made a great noise, had many sublime and moving passages (as the brothers, relatives, brothers-in-law, clients, and servants of Gryllus affirmed,) and was received with the loudest applause. Not that there were wanting in Abdera men who, having been endowed with more delicate ears than their fellow-citizens, or having heard elsewhere something better, did confess to each other that the nomophylax, with all his pretensions to being an Orpheus, was nothing more than an organ-grinder, whose best works were merely rhapsodies without taste, and almost without sense. These few were even so bold as on one occasion to make known a little of their heterodoxy to the public; but they were so badly received by the admirers of the Gryllian music, as to be

obliged to submit to the majority, in order to escape with a whole skin, and *now* these same gentlemen were the persons who in the very worst passages clapped the loudest.

The orchestra did its best to show itself worthy of its chief. "I have given them enough to do," said Gryllus, and he seemed not a little gratified to find that the poor people, by the end of the first act, had not a dry thread upon them.

By the way it must be owned that the orchestra was an institution in which the Abderites could rival all other cities in the world. The first thing which was said about it to any stranger was, that it was one hundred and twenty strong; and they added with a significant emphasis, "The Athenian orchestra numbers only eighty performers; but of course with a hundred and twenty it is easy to perform!" Amongst so many, undoubtedly, some skilful men were to be found—at least, men with whom a really good leader could do something; but such a leader never was and never could be found in Abdera. Besides, how could this assist their musical affairs? It was evidently decided in the council of the gods, that in the Thracian Athens nothing should be in its right place,

nothing answering to its aim, nothing right, nothing forming a complete whole.

Besides, as the performers got very little for their trouble, it was not thought right to ask much from them; and as the public were satisfied with everybody who tried to do his best, as they called it, nobody did try to do his best. The skilful became lazy, and those who were yet but halfway lost the energy, and finally the power to go onward. Why, indeed, should they give themselves the trouble to attain perfection, when they were working for Abderite ears? It is true that the foreigners amongst them had also ears, but they had no voice in the matter, and found it not worth while to find fault with the taste of Abdera, or perhaps they were too polite, or too politic, so to do. The nomophylax, stupid as he was, remarked as well as others that things did not go on so well as they ought; but then he had no taste, or, what came to the same thing, nothing was relished by him which was not cooked by himself; he always missed the right means by which he might have remedied it, and was too lazy and too awkward to communicate with others in a proper manner.

Perhaps he would sometimes submit when,

as it sometimes happened, his organ-grinder did not please the ears even of the Abderites, to lay the fault on the orchestra, and assure the ladies and gentlemen who paid him compliments, that not a note had been played as he had written it; but this was only a fire-escape in case of need, because it might be seen from the contemptuous manner in which he spoke of other orchestras, and from the merit which he claimed for that of the Abderites, that he was as well satisfied with it, as it was becoming for a patriotic nomophylax of Abdera to be.

But without mentioning the perfection of the music of the *Andromeda*, and of the scenery, it is a fact, that for a long time no other piece had given so much satisfaction. The singer who performed the part of *Perseus* was so tremendously applauded, that he forgot himself in the midst of the most striking passage, and finished it with a bravura out of another opera—one with which he was perhaps better acquainted than with the *Andromeda*. It is true that it was a comic opera, the *Cyclops*; but that mattered nothing on the present occasion;—*Andromeda*—in the scene where, chained to the rock, abandoned by all her friends, and exposed to the anger of the *Nereids*, she is awaiting with

agony the appearance of the monster—was obliged to repeat her monologue three times. The nomophylax could not conceal his delight at such brilliant success; he walked from box to box to collect the tribute of praise which thundered upon him on all sides; and he confessed, in the midst of these assurances, that "it was doing him too much honour, but that he was not so well satisfied with any other of his toys," as he used modestly to call his operas, "as with his *Andromeda*."

At the same time, in order to do justice to herself and the Abderites, it would have been only fair to admit, that at least half of the success was to be placed to the account of the actress *Eucolpis*, who, although already the favourite, found opportunities, in the part of *Andromeda*, to show herself off so advantageously, that the gentlemen, both young and old, of *Abdera*, could scarcely look at her enough. Indeed, where there was so much to be seen, there was little necessity of listening. *Eucolpis* was tall and well-made, a little more substantial, it is true, than was required for an Athenian beauty, but in this case, as in many others, the Abderites were decidedly Thracian; and a girl of whom a sculptor at *Sicyon* would

have made two, was, according to their accepted measure, a wonder of a nymph. As Andromeda was to be very thinly clad, Eucolpis, who was well aware in what consisted the power of her charms, invented a drapery of pink muslin, under which very little of her beauty was lost to the spectators, while at the same time the proprieties were not altogether forgotten; under such circumstances, of what earthly consequence was it whether she sang well or ill? Had the music been if possible more tasteless, and her acting ten times more faulty, she would have been equally obliged to repeat her monologue, because it afforded the most respectable pretext for keeping her so long before the eager eyes of the spectators.

"This is indeed, by Jupiter! a splendid piece," said one to the other, with half-closed eyes—"an incomparable piece! Do you not think that Eucolpis sings like a goddess to-day?"

"Oh! beyond all expression—it is, by Anubis! just as if Euripides had written the drama on purpose for her." The young gentleman who thus spoke, used always to swear by Anubis, to show he had been in Egypt.

The ladies, as it is easy to guess, did not find the Andromeda so wonderful as their lords.

"Middling—pretty well," said they. "But how does it happen that the characters have been so unfortunately cast? The play loses by it—the characters ought to have been changed—and the stout Eucolpis should have taken that of the mother! she would do very well for a Cassiopeia." A great deal of criticism was put forth about her hair, dress, &c.; she was not at all attired to her advantage—the girdle was placed too high, and drawn too tight, and above all, her affectation in putting her feet forward was vexatious, she was evidently proud of their disproportionate smallness." So said the ladies, who for contrary reasons used to conceal their own.

At the same time, both ladies and gentlemen agreed that she sang delightfully—and that nothing could excel the aria in which she lamented her fate. Eucolpis, although her acting was bad, possessed a very good, sonorous, and melodious voice. But that which had made her the favourite singer of Abdera, was, that she endeavoured to imitate certain modulations of the nightingale, which pleased both herself and the audience so much, that she introduced them everywhere—at the wrong time, as well as at the right: they were, notwith-

standing, always welcome. Whatever she might have to do—to laugh or to cry—to hope or to fear—to be angry or imploring—she always found occasion to introduce her nightingale notes, even though she spoiled the best passages by so doing.

As to the actors who personated Perseus, as the principal lover of Andromeda, Agenor her late lover, her father, her mother, and a priest of Neptune, we have nothing to say, except that many objections might be made to them in detail, although on the whole they satisfied their audience tolerably well. Perseus was a fine grown young man, and possessed great talent, as an Abderite Grimaldi, which was his proper character. The before-mentioned Cyclops, in the satirical play of that name, by Euripides, was his chief performance.

“He performed the Perseus very well,” said the Abderite ladies; “but it was a pity that the Cyclops sometimes comes in unawares.”

Cassiopeia, a pert, apish little creature, full of affected graces, had not one natural tone, but she stood high in the favour of the wife of the second archon, she possessed a very droll manner, had little songs to sing, and did the best she could.

The priest of Neptune roared a powerful sailor's bass—and Agenor sang miserably, as it became a rejected lover to do—it is true he sang no better when he had to play a first part, but as he was a tolerable dancer, he had a sort of privilege to sing the worse. “He dances beautifully,” was always the answer of the Abderites, when it was remarked that his croaking was insupportable—in the meantime Agenor seldom had to dance, although he sang in all the concerts and operas.

In order fully to understand the beauties of the Andromeda, it is necessary to imagine two choruses—one, of the Nereids, and the other of the attendants of Andromeda; both consisting of disguised school-boys, who demeaned themselves so ridiculously, that, to the great comfort of the Abderites, they had enough to laugh at, especially the chorus of the Nereids, owing to an invention introduced by the nomophylax, which had the most stupendous effect. The Nereides appeared with the upper half of their persons above water, with false golden hair and busts as feminine as could be contrived. The symphony to which these sea-wonders swam out, was an imitation of the celebrated “Brekekek, koax, koax,” in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, and

to make the illusion more perfect, Gryllus introduced cow-horns, which came on from time to time to imitate the Tritons blowing their sea-shells or conches.

For the sake of brevity, we will say nothing more about the decorations than that they were thought "very pretty" by the Abderites. A sunset in particular was admired, which was produced by a windmill, whose sails were furnished with long lighted matches. This, said they, "would have produced the most beautiful effect, had it been turned round a little quicker."

A connoisseur might also have wished that when Perseus flew up the stage in his winged sandals, the strings by which he was suspended, had been painted the colour of the atmosphere, so as not to come so distinctly before the eyes.

But on the whole the Andromeda was a "decided success."

CHAPTER VI.

Strange farce played by the Abderites with a foreigner,
and its unexpected *dénouement*.

As soon as the play was over, and the stunning applause a little relaxed, there was a general inquiry, as usual, of "Well, how do you like the drama?" followed of course with the usual answer.

One young gentleman, who passed for a perfect connoisseur, put the great question to a somewhat elderly stranger, sitting in one of the middle stalls, and who, from his appearance, seemed not to be an ordinary man. The foreigner, who had probably remarked that it was of very little use to answer except in one way, said, pretty readily, "Very much;" but as the tone made his approbation appear suspicious, and as it was accompanied by an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders, the young

gentleman would not allow him to escape so cheaply, so he said—

“It seems the play does not please you. It is, however, known as one of the best of Euripides!”

“Indeed! the piece is not so much amiss,” replied the stranger.

“Then it is the music that you object to?”

“Oh! as to the music, it is such as can be heard only in Abdera.”

“You are very kind! In fact our nomophylax is very great in his art.”

“Certainly.”

“Then you are not satisfied with the performers?”

“I am satisfied with everybody.”

“I thought Andromeda played her part charmingly.”

“Oh, yes, charmingly.”

“She produces a great effect, does she not?”

“You understand that best, I am not young enough.”

“At least you will allow that Perseus is a great actor?”

“Precisely so; a very handsome, well-made, man.”

“And the choruses; these are choruses which

do honour to their master ! Do you not think the idea of introducing the Nereids in that manner a very happy one ?”

The stranger seemed to have had enough of the Abderite. “I think (he replied a little impatiently) that the Abderites are very fortunate in being so well satisfied with everything.”

“Sir,” said the young man, in a tone of irony, “rather confess that the play has not had the good fortune and honour to please you.”

“Of what import to you is my approbation ? the majority decides.”

“There you are right ; but I wish, for the wonder’s sake, to hear what you could have to say against our actors and music.”

“What I could,” said the stranger, somewhat hastily ; but he soon checked himself. “Excuse me, I will not dispute with any one concerning what gives him satisfaction. The play, as it is here performed, is universally liked in Abdera ; what more can you desire ?”

“Not universally, it has not pleased you.”

“I am a foreigner.”

“But, foreigner or not, I should like to hear your reasons. Ha ! ha ! ha ! your reasons—your reasons, they won’t be foreign I suppose.”

The stranger began to lose his patience.

"Young gentleman, I have paid for my entertainment, and have applauded just as much as anybody else; there let it rest! I am going to continue my journey, I have business to attend to."

"Eh! Eh!" said another young Abderite who had listened to this conversation. "You will not leave us so soon, I hope; you seem to be a great connoisseur, you have excited our curiosity,—our desire to learn, (he said this with the jeering laugh of a conceited boy,) we cannot indeed let you go till you tell us what you see to censure in to-day's performance; I will not say anything about the text, I am no connoisseur in that, but the music, I dare to say, was incomparable."

"But after all, the text, as you call it, must decide that," said the stranger.

"What do you mean by that? I think music is music, and only ears are necessary to hear what is pretty."

"I concede, if you wish it, that this music had some pretty passages, it may be scientific music, set according to all the rules of art—scholastic and artistic; I have nothing to say against it, except that it is not adapted to the *Andromeda* of Euripides!"

"You mean that the words ought to be better expressed?"

"Oh! the words are sometimes too well expressed; but, on the whole, gentlemen, the intention of the author is lost sight of. The characters in the drama, the truth of the affections and impressions, the real appropriateness of the situation—all that music must be in order to become the language of nature—the language of passion; all that enables the author to float over it as his native element, and be upborn, but not submerged; all this has been completely mistaken or forgotten—in fact the whole is worth nothing—there! you have my opinion in three words."

The vivacity with which both the defenders of their country's taste attacked the white-bearded stranger, attracted to them several other Abderites, all attentive to the dispute which seemed to bear so much upon the credit of the national stage. All pressed round him at once, and although a tall and stately man, he found it necessary to lean against a pillar, to protect at least his back. "How I prove that," replied he quietly; "I shall not prove it at all! What! after having read the piece, seen the performance, and heard the music, you ask me for

proofs of my opinion!—I should lose time and waste breath were I to talk further on the subject with you.”

“The gentleman is not very easily satisfied, as I perceive,” said a senator, who came forward to join in the conversation, and for whom both the young men respectfully made room. “We have all two ears in Abdera; liberty is left to everybody,—but still—”

“How! what! what is the matter!” cried the short stout senator, waddling up. “Has the gentleman anything to say against this piece? I should like to hear it—ha! ha! ha! one of the best pieces, upon my soul, which has for a long time been brought out. Much action! very much—a—a, what was I about to say? a beautiful play, and an admirable moral.”

“Gentlemen,” said the foreigner, “I came to Abdera on business, and looked into your theatre for a little recreation; I have applauded, according to the custom of your country, and would have gone quietly away, had not these young gentlemen compelled me, in the most peremptory manner, to give them my opinion.”

“You have a perfect right so to do,” replied the other senator, who secretly was not a great admirer of the nomophylax, and who, upon

political grounds, had for some time been seeking an opportunity of getting rid of him in a courteous manner. "You are a connoisseur in music it seems."

"I speak according to my convictions," replied the stranger.

The Abderites around him became more and more clamorous. At last Gryllus himself, hearing that a discussion about the music was going forward, appeared on the spot. He had a very peculiar way of drawing his eyes together, turning up his nose, and shrugging his shoulders, when he intended to express contempt for a person with whom he found himself brought into collision.

"Well," he said, "my composition has not had the good fortune to please the gentleman; he is a connoisseur!—ha! ha! ha! he certainly understands music! yes."

"It is the nomophylax," whispered some one in the ear of the stranger, in order to bring him down at one blow, by discovering the high station of the man whose works he had judged so severely.

The stranger made his obeisance to the nomophylax, as was the custom in Abdera, and remained silent.

"Well, I should like to hear what the gentleman has to say against the composition! I do not answer for the faults of the orchestra, but a hundred drachmas for a fault in the composition—ha! ha! ha! well, let us hear."

"I do not know what you call faults," said the stranger. "In my opinion the music of which we are speaking has but one fault."

"And that is—" asked the nomophylax, elevating his nose.

"That the sense and the spirit of the author are entirely misrepresented," replied the foreigner.

"It is nothing more! then I did not understand the author, and you of course do—ha! ha! ha! Do you think we know nothing of Greek here? or perhaps you have entered into the head of the poet?—ha! ha! ha!"

"I know what I am talking about," replied the stranger, "and if it must be so, I beg leave to protest, verse after verse, through all the piece—and before all Greece."

"It would give you too much trouble," said the polite alderman.

"There is no occasion for it!" cried the nomophylax; "a vessel sails to-morrow for Athens, and I will write to Euripides—to the author, and send him the whole of the music!"

This gentleman certainly does not pretend to understand the play better than its own author; all here bear witness that Euripides himself shall decide the question."

"You may spare yourself that trouble," said the stranger, smiling, "because, and to end at once this discussion, I am Euripides to whom you would appeal!"

Of all the unlucky tricks that Euripides could have played the nomophylax of Abdera, this was certainly the least endurable, to be there himself in person, just at the moment when he had threatened to appeal to him. But who could imagine such a thing! What, by Anubis! had he to do in Abdera? and just at the moment, too, when one would prefer seeing a wolf, to seeing him! Had he been in Athens as was believed, (and where he resided,) all would have proceeded in the usual way; the nomophylax would have accompanied his composition with a polite letter, and have added to his name all his titles and honours. This would have had its effect. Euripides would have sent back an equally polite and Attic reply, Gryllus would have read it to all Abdera, and who could have then contested with him his victory over the foreigner! But that the stranger—

the clever, criticising stranger who told the nomophylax to his face what no one belonging to Abdera would have dared to have done, should prove to be Euripides himself,—this was one of those accidents for which a man like Gryllus could never have been prepared, and was sufficient to raise a blush in the face of any man but an Abderite.

The nomophylax generally contrived to extricate himself out of any difficulty, but nevertheless this blow first stunned him absolutely.

“Euripides!” he cried, and retreated three paces backward.

“Euripides!” reiterated at the same moment the politic senator, his short, stout colleague, both the young gentlemen and the whole circle of bystanders all looking around them as if to see from what cloud he had fallen.

A man is never less inclined to believe than when he is surprised by the fact which he had never considered as possible. This, then, was Euripides, the same of whom they had just spoken—the author of the *Andromeda*—to whom the nomophylax had threatened to write! was it possible?

The politic senator was the first to recover from the general consternation.

"A happy occurrence," said he, "by Castor! a happy circumstance. Mr. Nomophylax! now you need not copy your music, and besides, you can spare yourself the trouble of writing your letter."

The nomophylax felt the incalculable importance of the moment, and if it be a mark of a great man to seize at a decisive juncture the only means of extricating himself from a difficulty, it must be confessed that Gryllus might claim to be recognized as such.

"Euripides!" he exclaimed. "What! has the gentleman become Euripides all of a sudden? Ha! ha! ha! the idea is excellent; but here, in Abdera, it is not easy to make people believe that black is white."

"It would be amusing," said the stranger, "if here, in Abdera, I should not be allowed the right to use my name!"

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted the sycophant of Thrasyllus, "not the right to your name, but the right to proclaim yourself the Euripides to whom the nomophylax threatened to appeal. You may bear the name of Euripides, but to be the author of the *Andromeda* is quite another question."

"Gentlemen, I will be anything you like, if

it please you to let me go. I promise you my first step will be the direct way to your town gate, and the nomophylax may put me in an opera if ever I come back again."

"No, no, no! we cannot part with him so quickly. The gentleman has represented himself as Euripides, and now that he sees the case is becoming serious he wants to retreat. No! we cannot consent to this; he must prove that he is Euripides, or, as sure as my name is Gryllus—"

"Do not put yourself in a passion, my friend," said the politic alderman; "it is true I am not a physiognomist, but the stranger, to my eyes, looks like Euripides, and I should advise you to pause—"

"I wonder," said one of the bystanders, "that so much time should be lost, when the whole affair could be settled by a 'no' or a 'yes.' There, across the park, stands a statue of Euripides; we have nothing more to do than to judge whether the stranger is like the statue."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the short stout senator. "This is advice from a sensible man: ha! ha! ha! the statue must decide! there is no mistake about it!—the statue must decide, although it cannot speak!—ha! ha! ha!"

The bystanders laughed heartily at the witty idea of the fat little legislator, and all who were nimble enough ran to the park. The stranger surrendered himself to his fate with a good grace, and allowed them to examine him before and behind, and compare him piece by piece with the statue, as long as they thought proper to do so;—but, alas! the comparison could not serve him, because the statue was no more like Euripides than any other man in particular.

“Well!” cried the nomophylax in triumph; “what can the gentleman say now in his defence?”

“I can say,” replied the stranger, who seemed to enjoy the comedy, “what no one of you appears to be aware of,—although it is too true, that you are Abderites, and I am Euripides.”

“You may say! you may say!” grinned the nomophylax;—“ha! ha! ha! and what *can* you say?”

“I say that the statue has not the slightest resemblance to Euripides.”

“No, sir, you must not say so. The bust is a beautiful one; it is of white marble, as you may see, the marble of Paros, by Jove! and it cost us a hundred darics in ready money—you may believe me. It is the production of our

city-sculptor, a clever and celebrated man: his name is Moschior—you have heard of him, I suppose? a celebrated man! and, as is well known, all strangers who have visited us have admired the bust: it is genuine, you may depend upon it! you can see your name (as you affirm it to be) is written underneath in gold letters—

ΕΤΡΙΠΙΔΗΣ.

“Gentlemen,” said the stranger (who was obliged to use no small degree of self-control to prevent bursting with laughter), “may I put to you one question only?”

“Most willingly,” said the Abderites.

“Suppose there arises a contest between me and my bust which resembles me the most; which would you believe, me or the bust?”

“That is a curious inquiry,” said one of the Abderites, scratching his ear. “A captious question, by Jove!” cried another. “Be cautious what you do reply, worshipful Mr. Senator.”

“Is the stout gentleman a senator of this celebrated republic?” asked the stranger with a bow; “then I beg your pardon. I allow that the bust is a nicely-polished work of beautiful Parian marble; and if it does not resemble

me, it arises only from the bust being made much better-looking by your celebrated sculptor than I am by nature—in any case, it is a proof of his good-will, and it deserves all my gratitude.”

This compliment produced a great effect, as the Abderites were fond of being addressed in a courteous and polite manner. “It must, after all, be Euripides in person,” they murmured one to the other; and even the stout senator remarked, after a slight comparison of the bust with the foreigner, that there seemed to be something of a likeness in the beard.

Fortunately, at this moment the archon Onolaüs, with his nephew Onobalus, came up; the latter had seen Euripides a hundred times in Athens, and had often conversed with him. The joy of the young man at this unexpected meeting, and his positive affirmation that the stranger was really the celebrated Euripides, cut the knot at once, and the majority of the Abderites assured each other that they had perceived it at the first glance.

The nomophylax, seeing that Euripides had gained his cause against the bust, made off grumbling—“A vile trick,” he muttered. “Why was he so reserved! knowing that he was Euripides, why did he not introduce himself to me!

Things would then have taken quite a different turn!"

The archon, who used always in such cases to do the honours of the city of Abdera, invited the author, with great politeness, to accept his hospitality: he also invited both the senators present to favour him with their company for the evening, which invitation they accepted with great pleasure.

"Did I not say at once," said the stout legislator to one who was standing near, "that it was Euripides in person? The beard, the nose, the forehead, the shape of the ear, the eyes, all to a hair! I never saw anything so like! where was the perception of the nomophylax! But—yes, yes, yes, he had taken a little,—hem!—you understand me! '*Cantores amant humores*,' ha! ha! ha! But enough, we have Euripides amongst us! a fine man, by Jove! and one who will make us a great deal of fun! ha! ha! ha!"

CHAPTER VII.

How Euripides came to be in Abdera, and some secret notices concerning the court at Pella.

HOWEVER possible it was that Euripides should be in Abdera just at the moment when the nomophylax least expected or wished for him, and however accustomed we are to such unexpected apparitions on the stage, it becomes a very different matter when they take place in the pit of the theatre, so, by the majesty of history, we are bound to make the reader understand how it happened, and to relate faithfully all we know about it.

Well, all we know about it is this. The king, Archelaus of Macedon, a great lover of the fine arts and of fine minds,* conceived the idea of having his own court theatre, and from a concatenation of circumstances, reasons, inten-

* A phrase applied to the spoiled children of nature, and which we use when we hardly know in what other terms to describe them.

tions, and aims, which cannot interest anybody in our days, he succeeded in engaging Euripides on very advantageous terms to come to Pella with a troop of chosen actors, virtuosi, builders, painters, and machinists—in short, with all that was requisite—to take the direction of this court theatre.

It was on this journey that Euripides was proceeding with his company, and notwithstanding that the best and shortest road did not lead through Abdera, he preferred this route, having a great desire to see a republic so famous for the wit of its inhabitants. How it happened that he arrived just on the day that the *Andromeda* of the nomophylax was performed, we cannot say; but similar *apropos* occur more frequently than is believed, and are no greater wonders than other occurrences. For the rest, if we say that King Archelaus was a great *amateur* of the fine arts, it must not be taken too strictly, or in the strongest sense of the words, because it, is after all, only a figure of speech: in fact, this king was not much of a connoisseur. The truth was, His Majesty was often troubled with *ennui*, all his former amusements having become wearisome from their repetition. Besides, he was a man of great ambition, and had been told by his cham-

berlain that it was necessary for a great ruler to protect and encourage the arts and sciences—"Because," said the chamberlain, "your Majesty must have remarked that no statue, or bust, or medal of a great potentate can be seen without a Minerva standing on his right hand, and close by a trophy of armour, standards, lances, and maces; on the left are always kneeling some winged youths, or half-naked girls, with pencils and palettes, a parallel ruler, a flute, a lyre, and a roll of paper in their hands, representing the arts, who seem to be asking his protection; over all these flies Fame, with a trumpet in her mouth, to show that kings and princes gain immortal glory by becoming the protectors of the arts," &c.

So King Archelaus took the arts under his protection, and accordingly the historians have given us long and pompous descriptions of all he built; of how much he spent in paintings and statues, rich carpets, and elegant furniture; and how everything was to be "Etruscan" with him, even down to his stew-pans; and how he invited to his court celebrated artists, virtuosi, and others: all this, say they, he did to efface the crimes by which he raised himself to a throne which he was not born to inherit, as may,

with much more to the same purpose, be seen in Bayle and elsewhere.

After this little digression, return we to our Attic author, whom we shall meet in a brilliant circle of Abderite ladies and gentlemen, all "*crème de la crème*," sitting under a green pavilion in the garden of the archon Onolaus.

CHAPTER VIII.

How Euripides behaved himself among the Abderites.—
They devise a plot against him; from which will be
seen their polite activity, and which is the more sure
to succeed, as all the difficulties they see in it are
only imaginary ones.

It has been remarked in a preceding chapter
that Euripides, although personally unknown to
them, had long been held in high consideration
by the Abderites. Now, as soon as it was
known that he was present in person, the whole
town was in a ferment. Nothing was talked of
but Euripides.

“Have you seen Euripides?”

“How does he look?”

“Has he a large nose?”

“How does he hold his head?”

“What sort of eyes has he?”

“Of course he speaks only in verse?”

"Is he proud?"

And a hundred such questions, which were asked quicker than one could be answered.

The anxiety to see Euripides brought together many more than those who had been invited by the archon. All pressed around the good bald-pated author, to see if he looked as they had imagined; many, especially among the ladies, seemed to wonder that after all he looked so much like other people! Others remarked that he seemed to have a great deal of fire in his eyes, and the pretty Thrysallis whispered in the ear of her neighbour that he appeared a determined woman-hater.* She made this remark with an expression of pleasure at the triumph she anticipated, hoping that the power of her charms would make an impression on such an enemy of her sex.

Stupidity has its sublime as well as genius, and he who carries that quality to absurdity has reached it, which is always a source of pleasure to sensible people. The Abderites had the good fortune to have attained to this degree of perfection. Their unreasonableness at first sometimes

* It is well known that Euripides was accused of this terrible defect, although without deserving it.

made a foreigner impatient, but as soon as it was clear that they were all of a piece and had a great deal of trust in others, and equal confidence in themselves, it was easy to be reconciled to them, and in fact to derive more pleasure from their absurdities than from the wit of other people.

Euripides was never in so good a humour as with the Abderite party. He answered all their questions with the greatest politeness; laughed at all their silly conceits; let every one be valued according to his own valuation; and expressed himself concerning their theatre and music so agreeably, that everybody was satisfied.

"An exalted intellect!" said the politic senator to the Lady Salabanda, who was seated near him.

"That is easily seen—and so polite, and as modest as if he were not a great man!" replied Salabanda.

"The most amusing man in the world, by Jove!" said the short, stout legislator, on rising from table; "a very amusing man! I should not have supposed it, upon my soul!"

The ladies, whom he was wise enough to think very pretty, were well pleased, and treated him as if he had been twenty years younger than he was. In short, every one was en-

chanted with him, and only regretted that they could not have the pleasure and the honour of entertaining him longer in Abdera, because Euripides insisted that he must take his departure immediately.

At last the Lady Salabanda took the politician and the young Onobulus aside. "What would you say if we could induce him to give us his *Andromeda*? He has his own company with him; they must be extraordinary artists."

Onobulus thought the idea sublime. "I had the same thought just now," said the senator, "and was about to communicate it to you; but there are difficulties—the *nomophylax*?"

"Oh, for that, leave it to me," replied Salabanda; "I will make him warmly espouse the project."

"I will answer for my uncle," said Onobulus; "and this very night I will collect a party amongst our young men, who will strenuously support it in the city."

"Be not so rash," answered the serious senator, shaking his head; "we must not yet make ourselves so conspicuous. First the ground must be tried, and we must proceed gradually. This was always my doctrine."

"But we have no time to lose, Mr. Frog-keeper: * Euripides is going away."

"We will keep him longer," said Salabanda. "He is coming to me to-morrow; a garden-party and all the *élite* are invited. Leave it to me; the thing is certain."

Lady Salabanda passed in Abdera for a very clever person. She was a strong politician, and had great influence over the archon Onolaus. The high-priest was her uncle, and five or six senators, whom she counted in her friendly circle, seldom gave any other opinion in the sittings than what she had arranged for them on the previous evening.

Besides these, the admirers of the lovely Thrysallis, with whom she lived in the greatest intimacy, were at her command, without mentioning her own, who lived upon hope, and were consequently as pliant as gloves. Her house, which was one of the first in the town, was the place where all business was prepared beforehand, all disputes finished, and where all elections were brought to a final decision. In one

* The senator was one of the guardians of the holy frog-pool, which, in Abdera was considered a very high post. They were called *batrachotrophists*, which may be very properly expressed in English as frog-keepers.

word, the Lady Salabanda could do in Abdera whatever she wished.

Euripides, without the least intention of making use of the influence of this lady, had insinuated himself into her favour as much as if he had been desirous of an appointment as frog-keeper. If she introduced common-place notions on a political topic, he observed what a very sagacious remark it was ! Did she quote Simonides, or Homer, he admired her talent for declamation. She had rallied him about some passages in his works which had gained him in Athens the bad reputation of being an enemy to the fair sex, and he assured her and the pretty Thry-sallis, bowing to them, that his disgrace was the consequence of his not having come before to Abdera. In short, he behaved so well that Lady Salabanda was prepared to encourage a revolution, if she could not succeed by milder means in executing the project she had plotted with the politic senator. They took care, without delay, to secure the archon, who was generally very easily persuaded if he was assured that anything would tend to the glory of the republic and the gratification of the people ; but, as he was a gentleman very solicitous about his own peace and quiet, he declared that he left it

to them to arrange everything in a proper way—for himself, he should not like to come into collision with anybody, and least of all with the nomophylax, who was an impertinent fellow, but very popular among the people.

“As to the people, I would say, do not let your excellency take any trouble,” whispered the senator to him; “I shall transact it all by a third party, and without your appearing in the matter.”

“And I will take the senate upon myself,” said Salabanda.

“We shall see!” said the archon, returning to the company.

“Be quiet!” said the lady to her senatorial friend, stepping aside with him. “I know the archon; if you wish to have him with you, he must be spoken to about the matter only once in the evening, and if he says ‘No,’ you must come the next morning without any concern, and speak to him as if he had said ‘Yes;’ showing at the same time what you are sure would be the result. In this way you may depend on him as on gold. It is not the first time that I have caught him in this manner.”

“You are a clever woman!” replied Mr. Frog-keeper, tapping her gently on her rounded

arm; "only you are going too fast! But they perceive we are discussing something, and the effect may not be good; let us speak in a lower tone."

At that moment the Abderite ladies tripped up to them, followed by the rest of the company, to learn what they were talking about. The senator slipped away.

"Well, how are you pleased with Euripides?" said Salabanda; "he is a dear man, is he not?"

"Oh, a charming man!" cried all the fair Abderites.

"Pity only that he is bald!" added another.

"And that two of his teeth are gone!" said a third.

"You little simpleton! he is less able to bite you!" replied a fourth; and as this was considered a witty conceit, they all laughed heartily.

"Is he married?" asked a young thing who looked like a mushroom sprung up during the night.

"You would like perhaps to have him?" replied another young lady, satirically; "I think he has grandchildren to marry!"

"Oh, I would leave them for you!" said the younger one, tartly; and this stab was the keener, as the said young lady, though dressed

like a girl of eighteen, had her forty-fifth year on her shoulders.

"Children!" interrupted Salabanda, "talk no more of these things; something else is on the carpet. What would you say if I could persuade the stranger to stay here some days, and give us one of his plays by his own company of actors?"

"Oh, delightful!" exclaimed all the Abderite ladies, anxious for pleasure; "oh yes! could you do it?"

"I am willing to do it," replied Salabanda, "but you must assist me."

"Oh yes! oh yes!" cried all the ladies, and then they ran in a crowd to Euripides, and all cried out at once, "Mr. Euripides, you must perform a play for us! We will not let you depart till you have given us a play! Will you? you promise it?"

The poor man, on whose head this proposal came like an unexpected shower-bath, stepped back, and assured them that he never thought of performing a play in Abdera, he must proceed at once upon his journey, &c.; but all this, availed him nought.

"We will not let you have any rest, and we are sure you are too kind to refuse; we will ask you so sweetly."

"In fact," said Salabanda, "we have formed a decided plot against you."

"And one which shall not fail, or my name is not Onobulus!" interrupted the young man.

"What is the matter? What is going forward now?" said the senator, who feigned ignorance, and approached slowly, with an uncertain glance; "what are you about with the gentleman?"

His fat colleague came waddling up also,—
"I believe, the Gods bless me! that you will take his heart into custody—he! he! he!" and he laughed so that he was obliged to hold his sides.

They enlightened him about the matter.

"Ha! ha! ha! a pretty conceit, bless me, Jupiter! I join in it, I promise you. The author himself! That will be worth seeing; it will confer great honour on Abdera—a great honour, friend Euripides. It will rejoice us to see our people profiting by so excellent a master."

Several other gentlemen of consequence expressed themselves nearly in the same way.

Euripides, who, in fact, did not think the idea a bad one, as it would give him a great deal of amusement with the Abderites, still affected astonishment, and excused himself by saying that he had promised King Archelaus to make haste on his journey.

"Eh! what?" said Onobulus; "you are a republican, so a republic has a greater claim upon you than a king."

"Only tell His Majesty," said the beautiful Myris, "that we asked you so prettily! He is a courteous gentleman, and will not blame you because you could not refuse a request preferred by six ladies at once."

"Oh Love! great king of Gods and men!" exclaimed Euripides in a tragic tone, looking at the same time at the pretty Thrysallis.

"If you are serious," said Thrysallis, with the accent of a person who is not accustomed either to refuse or be refused; "if you are in earnest, prove it by yielding to my wishes."

This "my wishes" very much vexed the other fair Abderites.

"We must not be importunate," said one of them aside.

"We must not ask the gentleman anything that it is impossible for him to do," said another.

"To give you pleasure, lovely ladies," said the poet, "the impossible would become possible to me."

As this was nonsense it pleased every one. Onobulus took out his tablets, and hastily wrote down the words with his stylet. The women

and girls cast a look at Thrysallis, as much as to say, "See, he called us lovely too! There is no occasion for madam to be so proud of her face; he remains here not only for her, but for us."

Salabanda finally put an end to the confusion by asking of him only the kindness to grant her and her friends, who were all his warm admirers, but one day more. Euripides, who, in fact, found himself amused in Abdera, and in no hurry to leave, did not require repeated solicitations from the ladies, so he accepted an invitation which would afford him materials for a farce at the court of Pella.

The company therefore agreed to meet next day at Salabanda's, and separated with much pleasure at midnight.

CHAPTER IX.

Euripides inspects the town.—Makes the acquaintance of the priest Strobilus, and hears from him the history of Latona's frogs.—Remarkable conversation between Democritus, the priest, and the poet.

IN the mean time, Onobulus, in company with several young gentlemen of his grade, conducted their guest the next day over the town, to show him all that was remarkable in it.

On the way they were met by Democritus, who had long before been acquainted with the author. They walked together, and as the town was extensive, the elder gentlemen had every opportunity of profiting by the information of the younger ones (whose mouths were always open). They knew everything, decided on everything, and it never occurred to them that it might have been more becoming to listen, in the society of such men, than to expect to be listened to.

Euripides had enough to hear and see that morning. The young Abderites, who had never been beyond the gates of their native town, spoke of everything which they pointed out as of wonders which had no equal in the world. Onobulus, on the contrary, who had made "the great tour," compared everything he had seen of the same kind at Athens, Corinth, Syracuse, and found stupid apologies for the admitted fact that they were more striking and magnificent in those cities than in Abdera.

"Young man," said Democritus, "it is right that you should honour all that belongs to your native city; but if you wish to give us a proof of it, set aside Athens, Corinth, and Syracuse. Let us take everything as it is, and no comparisons; then we shall want no excuses."

Euripides found everything that was pointed out to him "wonderful." A library was shown to him, containing a great number of useless and unread books, and a collection of coins, many of which were only imitations; a rich hospital, with many poor patients badly attended; an arsenal with but few weapons, and a fountain with still less water. The town-hall was pointed out to him, where the good town of Abdera was so well regulated, and the temple

of Jason with the gilded ram's-skin, which they represented as the celebrated golden fleece, although very little gold could now be seen upon it. They viewed the old smoky temple of Latona, and the tomb of Abderus, who founded the city, and the gallery where all the archons of Abdera were represented the size of life, and looked as like each other as if each succeeding one was a copy of the former. Finally, when they had seen everything else, they were conducted to the sacred pool, where croaked the largest and fattest frogs that were ever seen, fed at the common expense of the town, and which, as the priest Strobilus seriously assured them, derived their descent from the Lycian peasants, who refused to allow the weary and thirsty Latona to drink from their ditch, for which they had been condemned by Jupiter to be transformed into frogs.

"Reverend sir," said Democritus, "do tell the foreign gentleman the story of these frogs, and how it occurred that the sacred ditch of Lycia came over the Ionian sea, which, as you know, is at a great distance from Abdera—over mountains and deserts—and which, I may say, is a greater miracle than even the transformation of the Lycian peasants into frogs."

Strobilus cast a sharp glance at the eyes of the stranger and Democritus ; but as he did not discover anything there to indicate that they were scoffers who did not deserve to be initiated in such high mysteries, he asked them to sit down under a large fig-tree which overshadowed one side of Latona's little temple, and related to them all he knew about the matter, with as much simplicity as if it were an everyday occurrence.

"The story of the worship of Latona in Abdera," said he, "is lost in the mist of remotest antiquity. Our ancestors, the Teians, who became masters of Abdera 140 years ago, found that it had been established from a most distant period, and the temple is perhaps the oldest in the world, as you may judge from its construction and other visible signs of antiquity. It is not allowed, as you know, to raise with censurable zeal the sacred veil thrown over the origin of deities and their worship. All is lost in the times previous to the art of writing. But verbal traditions from father to son are, as far as may be necessary, a substitute for written chronicles, and are, so to speak, a living chronicle even preferable to dead letters. This tradition says, that at the time of the transformation of the

Lycian peasants, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and those peasants who did not share in the crime, recognized (as witnesses of the miracle) Latona, with her twins Apollo and Diana at her breast, as deities ; built, on the spot where the transformation took place, an altar; and proclaimed the wooded country around the ditch as a sacred grove. The country was then called Milia, or Milias, and the peasants transformed were properly spoken of as Milians; but a long time afterwards Lycus, the second son of Pandion, with an Attic colony, seized upon the country and gave it the name of Lycia. On this occasion such of the inhabitants as were unwilling to accept the government of the said Lycus, left their fatherland, embarked in many vessels, were beaten about some time in the Ægæan Sea, and finally settled in Abdera, which shortly before had been entirely depopulated by a pestilence. On their departure, nothing was so painful to them as leaving the sacred pool of Latona. After long reflection, they at last decided on removing with them some young trees from the holy grove, with their roots and the earth about them, as well as a certain number of frogs from the pool, in a cask filled with the sacred water. On arriving at Abdera, their first con-

cern was to dig another pool, which is the very one you now see before you. They led an arm of the river Nestus into it, and filled it with the descendants of the Lycians or Milians transformed into the frogs, which they brought with them in the sacred water. They planted around the pool (to which they gave carefully the size and form of the old one) the young trees they brought with them, dedicated it again as Latona's grove, built this temple to her, and ordained a priest whose duty it is to perform the rites of her worship and watch over the grove and the stream, thus transplanted hither from Lycia, without that great miracle which Democritus imagines.

"This temple, as well as the grove and the pool, remained protected by the reverence which was paid to divine things, even by the wild Thracians, through all the changes and misfortunes to which Abdera had been subjected, till the city was rebuilt by our ancestors the Teians, in the time of the great Cyrus, and reached, as may be said without vain-glory, that splendour which leaves us nothing to envy in any city in the world."

"You are speaking like a true patriot, vene-

able high-priest," said Euripides. "But may I ask you a modest question?"

"If you please—all that you wish," interrupted Strobilus. "I shall never be at a loss, thank the gods! to give you an answer."

"Then, with your reverence's leave," proceeded Euripides, "all the world knows the noble way of thinking, the love of splendour and of the fine arts, which belongs to the Teïan Abderites, and of which your town affords everywhere the most striking proofs. How is it, then, that as the Teïans have been known from the remotest period as the worshippers of Latona, the Abderites have never had the idea of building for her a more magnificent temple?"

"I expected this reproach," said Strobilus, with a smile, elevating his eyes, and looking wonderfully sagacious.

"It is not a reproach, but a simple question," replied Euripides.

"I will answer it," said the priest. "It would doubtless have been easy for the republic to have built a temple to Latona, suitable to a goddess of the first class, since they erected so magnificent a one to Jason, who was only a

hero, but the republic rightly understood that it was more in accordance with the respect we owe to the mother of Apollo and Diana to leave the ancient temple as we found it; and it is, and will continue to be, the principal and most sacred one in Abdera, notwithstanding anything that may be said against it by the priest of Jason."

Strobylus pronounced these words with so much vehemence, that Democritus thought it necessary to assure him that this would certainly be admitted by all right-thinking and well-informed people.

"In the mean time," continued the high-priest, "the republic has given such proofs of its special devotion to the temple of Latona, and its accessories, that no doubt can be left about the purity of its intentions. They have appointed not only a college of ten priests for the service of her temple, of which college I have the honour of being the unworthy chief, but also, by the care of the senate, three guardians of the sacred pool are elected, the first of whom is always one of the heads of the State. The Government has also, from motives the rectitude of which we are not allowed to question, extended the inviolability of Latona's

frogs to all animals of this sort throughout their territory, and for this reason have all the storks, cranes, and other enemies of the frogs been banished from Abdera."

"If the assurance that we are not allowed to deny the rectitude of the proceeding had not withheld me," said Democritus, "I might have taken the liberty of suggesting to you that it was established rather through a scruple or superstition,* in itself laudable, but carried to an unwarrantable extreme, rather than on the nature of the thing, or from the reverence due to Latona; because, in fact, nothing can be more certain than that the frogs in Abdera and the country around are already so troublesome to the inhabitants, and will soon multiply to such an extent through this protection, that I cannot conceive how our descendants will be

* The apostle Paul makes use of this word in speaking ironically, or at least equivocally, of the unbounded devotion of the Athenians. *Apost. Hist.* xvii. 22. It could be translated reverence for gods or demons.*—*Note by the Author.* [There appears no reason to suspect the apostle of any irony in the use of this expression. The Athenians understood the word precisely in the sense in which he employed it, and were evidently not disposed to be otherwise than pleased with its application.—TRANSLATOR.]

able to tolerate them. I speak now only from a human point of view, and submit my opinion to the correction of my superior, as is becoming to a right-minded Abderite."

"In which you do well," said Strobilus, "whether you are in earnest or not; and would do still better (do not take it ill my suggesting as much to you) if you would not make such opinions known. After all, nothing can be more ridiculous than to live in fear of frogs, and I think, under the protection of Latona, we can afford to despise more dangerous foes than these good and innocent creatures—if, indeed, foes they should ever become."

"That is exactly my opinion," said Euripides, "and I wonder that so great a naturalist as Democritus does not see that the frogs, which live upon insects and young snakes, are rather useful than injurious to man."

The priest was so well pleased with this remark, that from that moment he became one of the greatest admirers and patrons of our poet.

Scarcely had the gentlemen taken leave, when he went into several of the principal houses, assuring every one that Euripides was a man of great merit. "I have remarked,"

said he, "that his opinions do not agree at all with those of Democritus; he gave him more than once a good rap over the knuckles. He is really a man of a very pretty understanding—for a poet."

CHAPTER X.

The senate of Abdera grants Euripides, without his asking for it, a licence to perform one of his plays on the Abderite stage.—Artifice which was resorted to in similar cases, by the chancery of Abdera.—Singular plan of the Abderites to help one who was standing in their way, out of it.

AFTER Euripides had seen all the curiosities of Abdera, he was conducted to the garden of Salabanda, where he found her husband (a man conspicuous only through his wife), and a large circle of the Abderite *beau monde*, all very anxious to learn what was to be done to become a Euripides.

Euripides saw but one way of coming out of the business with honour, and that was, to be, in such goodly company, not Euripides, but, as far as he possibly could, an Abderite. The good people wondered to find him so like themselves.

"He is a charming man," they said; "it might be imagined that he had spent his life in Abdera."

The plot of Madame Salabanda went gallantly on, and the next morning all the town was full of the news that the foreign author was going to represent with his company a play the like of which was never before seen in Abdera.

It was the day the council sat; the learned gentlemen assembled, and asked each other when the play of Euripides was to be acted? Nobody chose to know anything about the matter, although all positively asserted that the preparations were in progress.

When the archon moved the business, many of the friends of the nomophylax were very much offended. "Why," said they, "is our permission to be asked, when the thing is already decided, and is spoken of by everybody as a certainty?"

One of the boldest contended, that for this very reason the senate ought to say "No," and show who were the masters.

"That would be a pretty business," said the guildmaster Awl. "Because the town is excited by the prospect and wishes to hear the foreign actors, the senate is to say 'no!' I

support just the contrary: because the people wish it, they ought to perform. '*Fox pobulus fox Deus*'—this was always my ultimatum, and shall remain so as long as I remain myself head of the guild of cordwainers."

The greater part sided with Mr. Awl. The politic senator shrugged his shoulders, spoke for and against it, and concluded finally, "If the nomophylax has nothing to say against it, it might be left as tacitly understood, that the foreigners should perform on the republican stage."

Till this moment the nomophylax had only turned up his nose, growled, stroked his whiskers, and murmured a few broken words, interrupted by a derisive "ha! ha! ha!" He did not wish to be thought very anxious to oppose the thing, but the more he tried to conceal his opposition, the more perceptible it was. He swelled like a turkey-cock before which a red handkerchief is held, and at last, as he had no choice but to burst or to speak, he said,—

"Gentlemen may think whatever they like, but I am really the most desirous among you to hear the new piece. Undoubtedly the poet has adapted the music to the words, and it will be a real novelty. In the mean time, as his stay

must be so short, I do not see how the scenery can be ready; and if we are to have our people for the choruses, I am sorry to be obliged to say that there is no possibility of its coming off within a fortnight."

"That will be the business of Euripides himself!" said one of the senators, who was the mouthpiece of Salabanda; "and besides, we ought to leave to him the direction of his play."

"Without prejudice to the rights of the existing nomophylax, and the dramatic board," added the archon.

"I am satisfied with everything," said Gryllus. "The gentlemen wished for something new—well, I hope it will succeed! I am myself anxious to hear it. The only question here is, have we confidence in the people?—you understand me. In the mean time right will remain right, and music music; and I wager you all what you like, that the quavers, crotchets, and minims of the Athenians will sound exactly like ours. He! he! he!"

It was carried by a great majority, "That it shall be granted to the foreign comedians, *semel pro semper et citra consequentiam*, to perform a tragedy on the national stage, that every assistance shall be given them by the dramatic

board, and that the expenses shall be paid from the theatrical fund."

But as the expression of "granted" might be displeasing to Euripides, who had asked nothing, Salabanda arranged that the reporter, who was her intimate friend and humble servant, should so far alter the decree as to change "*granted*" into "*requested*," and "*foreign comedians*" into "*the celebrated Euripides*;"—all this without prejudice to the rights of the senate and the board, and *citra consequentiam*.

As soon as the sitting was over, the nomophylax went to Euripides, overwhelmed him with compliments, offered his services, and assured him that every assistance should be afforded him to perform his piece as soon as possible. The result of this assurance was, that every impediment was thrown in his way (the blame of which could be thrown on no one), and that everything was deficient which was necessary. If he complained, one sent him to another, and they every one attested his innocence and good-will, making it distinctly to be understood that the fault rested on one or the other, who a quarter of an hour before had declared himself the most zealous in the service.

Euripides found the Abderite manner of

assistance so troublesome that he could not help declaring to Lady Salabanda, on the morning of the third day, his determination to profit by the first wind, from whatever quarter it might blow, to embark, as, contrary to the orders of the senate, the board gave him no assistance at all. As the archon, in whom all the executive power lay, was not a man of action, the only thing to be done in this difficulty was to set in motion the guildmaster Awl, and the priest Strobilus, who had great credit with the people.

Salabanda managed them both with such good effect, that in the space of four-and-twenty hours all was ready that was to have been done by the dramatic board, and which could be done so much easier, as Euripides had with him his own decorations, and they had nothing more to do than to adapt them to the Abderite theatre.

CHAPTER XI.

In spite of all impediments, the *Andromeda* of Euripides is performed by his own company.—Extraordinary sensibility of the Abderites, followed by a digression, being one of the most learned in the whole work, and therefore of no earthly use whatever.

THE Abderites were expecting a new play, and consequently were dissatisfied that it was the *Andromeda*, which they fancied they had seen but a few days before. Still less could they approve of the foreign actors, whose tone and manner were so natural that the good people, who were accustomed to see heroes and heroines raving like mad people and crying out like the wounded Mars in the *Iliad*, could not comprehend what it meant.

"It is a strange kind of acting," whispered they to each other; "one cannot imagine one's

self at the play : it sounds as if they were each performing their own individual character."

In the mean time they made known their admiration of the decorations, which were painted in theatrical perspective by a celebrated artist of Athens ; and as most of them had never seen anything really good of the kind, they were so bewitched with the representation of the sea-shore, and the rock to which Andromeda was chained, and the bower of the Nereids, with a little stream at one side, and the palace of King Cepheus on the other, that they could have sworn all was real and true as represented. Besides, the music was according to the idea of the poet, — was exactly what that of Gryllus was not, and consequently touched the heart ; notwithstanding its great simplicity, its melody was always new and surprising. All this, together with the great vivacity of the declamation and action, with the beauty of the voices and elocution, produced in the Abderites a sort of illusion which they had never experienced before.

They forgot that they were sitting in their national theatre, and imagined themselves in the real place of action, taking part in the good or bad fortune of the actors as if they were their nearest relations, and they were afflicted

and uneasy, hoped and feared, loved and hated, wept or laughed, as it pleased the wizard in whose power they were. In short, the Andromeda impressed them so much, that Euripides himself avowed he had never before seen his play produce so much sensation.

We beg pardon (by way of parenthesis) of our young readers, especially those of the fairer sex, who, by dint of extreme sentiment, have arrived at last at the point of having no sentiment at all. It was not our intention to offend them by this description of the extraordinary simplicity of the Abderites, and, so to speak, to throw out seriously any imputation against themselves: we relate the thing as it occurred, and if this great sensibility of the Abderites appears so strange, we request them kindly to reflect, that, with all their Abderitism, they were men notwithstanding, and in a certain sense the more so because they were Abderites. They were as easily cheated as the birds which came to peck at the grapes painted by Zeuxis; they allowed themselves with the more innocence and sincerity to be led away by every impression, especially the illusions of art,—more easily, in fact, than finer and colder and consequently wiser men are accustomed to be.

Moreover, the author of this history observes, that the great disposition the Abderites had to be impressed by the arts of imagination and imitation, is not precisely what he liked the least in them. But for this he might have his particular reasons.

In fact, authors, musicians, and painters, have a very difficult game to play before a scientific and refined public; and the conceited connoisseurs who compose a great part of such public, are the most difficult to satisfy: instead of receiving impressions quietly, they do all they can to hinder them—instead of enjoying what is within reach, they are reasoning about what more is required—instead of giving way to an illusion where the destruction of the charm can only rob us of a pleasure, they make it a point of honour, I do not know why, to act the philosopher out of season; they force themselves to laugh when people with their natural feelings about them would have tears in their eyes; and where others would laugh, they turn up their noses, and give themselves airs of being too strong-minded, or too refined, to be moved by anything.

But even really sensible people spoil the enjoyment which they would derive from a thou-

sand things good of their kind, by comparisons which are mostly unjust and always against their own interest, because what our pride gains by despising a pleasure is only a shadow at which we are grasping while the substance flies away.

At the same time it is clear that the poet must do his part in order to create and keep up the illusion; otherwise he has clearly no right to expect us, merely to please him, to act as though we saw what he does not show us, and felt what he does not impress on us.

We find, too, that it was exactly among the most barbarous races that the son of the music-god performed those wonders which men describe even yet, without exactly knowing what they are talking about. The woods in Thrace danced to the lyre of Orpheus, and the wild beasts crouched down at his feet, not because he was a demi-god, but because the Thracians were—wild beasts; not because he sang with superhuman melody, but because his hearers were unsophisticated children of nature;—in short, just for the same reason as, according to Forster's narrative, the good people of Tahiti fell into a frenzy of enthusiasm at the tones of a Scotch bagpipe.

The application of this not very new, but certainly very practical observation—an observation which everybody has heard often and often, but very few have thought worthy of attention—the reader may make for himself, if he feels inclined. Our own consciences may tell us how far we in other matters are Thracians or Abderites; but if we are in this particular, why—so much the better for us, and certainly for the greater number of our poetical bagpipers too.

CHAPTER XII.

How Abdera became mad with admiration of the *Andromeda* of Euripides.—Essay, philosophical and critical, upon the singular frenzy which is generally called by the old writers the Abderite epidemic.

WHEN the curtain fell, the Abderites still continued to look towards the stage with open eyes and mouths; and so great was their ecstacy, that they not only forgot their usual question, "How did you like the play?" but would have forgotten the clapping also, had not Salabanda and Onolaus, who first recovered themselves, broken the silence, and thus saved their fellow-citizens from the reproach of not having applauded on the first occasion that they would have been justified in doing so.

However, they made up, with interest, what had been so long neglected, and the clapping was no sooner commenced than it became most

vehement and prolonged; those who were first exhausted recommencing after an interval with greater energy, till they were again relieved by those who had rested. But this was not sufficient; the good Abderites were so full of what they had heard and seen, that they were obliged to give vent to their feelings after another manner. Many of them stopped on their way home, in the public streets, repeating aloud such passages as had pleased them most, and with some the frenzy went so far as to impel them to sing, well or ill, as the case might be, what they retained in their memory of the exquisite music.

Imperceptibly, the paroxysms (as is always the case) became general. A fairy seemed to have stretched her wand over Abdera, and changed all her inhabitants into so many comedians and singers. All who could breathe, spoke, sang, hummed, played, or whistled, sleeping and waking, day after day, passages from the *Andromeda*. Everywhere was heard the great solo,

“O Love! great king of gods and men,” &c., &c., and it was sung so long, with variations, that at last nothing remained of the original melody, and finally it descended to the street-boys, who roared and whistled it through the streets all day.

If my advice had not the only fault of being impracticable, like that of many other wise men, I should hasten to recommend my readers never to believe anything that they hear, because the experience of thirty years has convinced me that no two relations of the same tale agree, and even an occurrence of yesterday, or of an hour ago, would not be related by two persons in the same manner; consequently there must always be some falsehood, as truth is ever consistent.

If this be the case with occurrences of our own time, in the place where we reside, and almost under our eyes, it is easy to see how far the historical truth of events that occurred long since may be depended on, for which we have only the warranty of written or printed books. Heaven knows how poor, respectable truth is cheated, and how much remains of her after having been, for one or two thousand years, sifted, drawn out, and compressed, by the medium of so many false traditions, chronicles, journals, pragmatical histories, abbreviated recapitulations, historical dictionaries, collections of anecdotes, &c.; and after having passed through so many washed and unwashed hands of writers, copyists, compositors, translators,

censors, and correctors ! For my part, I have decided, from the observation of these things, never to write the history of persons about whose existence, or of events about whose credibility, anybody cares !

I have been led to this digression by the event before us, which has been so singularly treated, and mal-treated, by different authors, that the candid reader can scarcely form any idea of it.

For instance, there is Yorick, the discoverer, father, protoplast, and prototype of all sentimental journeys and sentimental travellers, who, without purse or scrip, without having worn out a single pair of shoes, travels for no other object than to pay his beer and tobacco bills,—I repeat, there is this Yorick, who, in order to make an attractive chapter in his “*Sentimental Journey*,” dresses up this same story in such a way that it looks like a wonderful and adventurous fairy tale, but with the loss of its individual genuineness, and even all the Abderite family likeness.

Please to attend :—“The town of Abdera,” says he, “was the most scandalous and impious town in all Thracia, swarming with poisoners, conspirators, murderers, libellers, pamphleteers,

and rioters. By daylight no one was sure of his life, by night it was worse; and when the scandal was at its height, the *Andromeda* of Euripides was performed; it pleased all the spectators, but the passage that produced the greatest effect on the imagination was that which the poet puts into the mouth of Perseus—'O Cupid, prince of gods and men!'

"The following day all the people spoke only in jingles, and of nothing else but the sentimental monologue of Perseus—'O Cupid, prince of gods and men!'. To say the truth, this passage is the only sentimental one, in the whole fragment of the speech of Perseus, which has accidentally been preserved, as our readers may see for themselves by consulting the original. In every street of Abdera, in every house, nothing but 'O Cupid! Cupid!'—in every mouth, nothing else but 'O Cupid, prince of gods and men!'. The mania spread, and all the town, like the heart of one man, was open to love. No druggist could get rid of an ounce of hellebore; no armourer had the heart to make a weapon of death. Friendship and virtue met and kissed each other, and hovered over Abdera. Every Abderite took his shepherd's flute; every lady laid aside her

purple, and sat down chastely to listen to the song."

Really a very pretty chapter! All the youths and maidens found it delightful. "O Cupid! Cupid! prince of gods and men!" And thus a single verse of Euripides, and one the like of which the commonest street-singer might compose by scores, standing, as Horace says, on one leg, performed a wonder which could not be achieved by all the priests, prophets, and wise men of the world together, namely, the miracle of changing the scandalous, abominable, and impious town of Abdera into an innocent and lovely Arcadia! This, of course, pleases the sentimental male and female lovers and turtle-doves! It is only a pity, that in the whole history, as brother Yorick relates it, there is not a word of truth.

All the secret is, the wonderful man was in love when he imagined all this, and he wrote as it becomes every honest innamorato and virtuoso to do, who rides his own hobby-horse and fancies he writes the truth. Only it is not fair of him to accuse the poor Abderites of the worst crimes which can be charged against mankind, in order to pay a compliment to his favourite god

Cupid. Not one among the Greek and Roman antiquaries can rise and show that anything so bad could be said of this worthy people. They had, it is true, their humours and spleens, and, as we know, they had not a very large share of sense and reason; but to represent their town as a murderers' hole goes beyond the bounds of the widest poetical licence. This sort of liberty, like everything else in the world, however large a step you allow it, must have its limits.

Lucian of Samosata, in the preface to his celebrated little book, "How History should be Written if possible," tells the story quite otherwise, although (with his permission) not very justly either. He must have heard something of the King Archelaus, and the Andromeda, as well as the singular extravagance which overtook the Abderites, and how they were obliged to call to their aid Hippocrates, to put everything to rights in Abdera. And now see what a mess the author makes of the whole story. He says:—"The comedian, Archelaus, who was at that time the most eminent of the day," (a kind of Greek Garrick or Talma),—"this Archelaus came in the time of King Lysimachus to Abdera, and represented the Andromeda of Euripides. It was a fine summer's day; the sun blazed over

the heads of the Abderites, which were, it is said, quite hot enough before. The whole town returned from the play with a fever. On the seventh day the illness ended with most of them by violent bleeding of the nose, or a strong perspiration; but a strange symptom remained, for when the fever subsided they were attacked with an irresistible propensity for speaking in iambs, declaiming tragic verses, and spouting, as they stood still, or moved about, entire tirades from the *Andromeda*, or singing the monologue of *Perseus*, 'O Cupid!' " &c.

Lucian, in his satirical way, is very merry about this idea. "How absurd it must have been to see all the streets of Abdera swarming with pale meagre creatures, worn out by a seven-days' fever, singing 'O Cupid, prince of gods and men!' with all their might!" He asserts, too, that this epidemic lasted till the return of the winter, which was an unusually cold one, put an end to it.

It must be conceded that Lucian's way of relating the circumstance is far preferable to Yorick's, because, singular as this Abderite fever may appear, all physicians will agree that it was at any rate possible, and all authors, that it was characteristic. It may be said of it as say the

Italians, "*Se non è vero, è ben trovato*;" but true it is not, by any means, as may be found from the simple circumstance, that, at the time it was said to have occurred in Abdera, the place was uninhabited, the Abderites having emigrated several years before, leaving their town to the rats and frogs.

Briefly the circumstances were as we have related them, and if the paroxysm which befell the Abderites after the performance of the *Andromeda* is to be termed a fever, it was no more than that kind of dramatic fever of which we have seen so many instances in Italian and German towns at the present time: the evil was not in the blood, but in the Abderitanism of the good people in general.*

Meanwhile it cannot be denied, that in some cases, where the fire found more tinder and more fuel, the matter may have been serious enough to call for a physician's help, and this, probably, gave rise to Lucian's mistake, that all were afflicted with a kind of high fever together. Fortunately Hippocrates was in the neighbourhood,

* [England has been by no means free from such fevers, and America has had her share. Jenny Lind was the occasion of such an epidemic in both countries.—
TRANSLATOR.]

and, as he pretty well knew the Abderitan constitution, a few pounds of hellebore set all speedily in its former state, so that the Abderites ceased to sing "O Cupid, prince of gods and men!" and became just as rational as they were before.

END OF VOL. I.



THE
REPUBLIC OF FOOLS:

BEING
THE HISTORY
OF THE
STATE AND PEOPLE OF ABDERA.
IN THRACE.

Translated from the German of C. M. von Mieland,

BY
HENRY CHRISTMAS, M.A., F.R.S.,

ETC., ETC., & ETC.

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THE REPUBLIC OF FOOLS.

BOOK IV.

THE LITIGATION CONCERNING THE ASS'S SHADOW.

CHAPTER I.

Cause of the law-suit.

THE fatal period of Abdera appears at last to have arrived. Scarcely had they recovered from the extraordinary theatrical fever which the "Cupid, prince of gods and men," of the pure-minded and inoffensive Euripides had excited,—scarcely had the citizens leisure again to converse with each other in prose in the streets,—scarcely had they recommenced the sale of spices, hellebore, defensive arms, foils, and carving-knives,—scarcely had the Abderite women renewed their work of purple texture,—scarcely had the townsmen flung away their miserable shepherds' reeds, and applied themselves (in their usual zealous

way) to their various occupations and professional pursuits, in better plight than ever,—when the Fates, spinning their sacred web, prepared out of the thinnest, most worthless, and most useless material, such an accursed robe to clothe the glory of Abdera withal, that the like never was seen since the history of man began to be recorded.

Such an abominable mixture of adventures, bargains, law-suits, insurrections, inflammations, cabals, parties, and other unreasonable contrivances, fill the page, and all so complicated by the aid of partisans, opponents, helpers, and promoters, that we may henceforward look only for the sad narrative of a decaying republic.

The mischief began, as great events very often do, from a very slight occasion. There was a certain dentist, named Struthion, by birth and parentage a Megarean, who had been for many years settled in Abdera, and as he was, in the whole country, the only member of the profession, his practice ran over a considerable part of Southern Thrace. His usual mode of laying the country under contribution was to attend all the fairs and markets within a circuit of some thirty miles, where he sold not only tooth-powders and brushes, but also various

nostrums against hysterical affections, hypochondriacal vapours, asthma, rheumatism, &c., at a reasonable profit. For these little excursions he kept but one ass in his stable, which, on setting out, was always heavily laden, first with the dentist's own short, thick, and clumsy person, and secondly with a large wallet strapped behind him full of quack remedies, provisions for the road, and a few trifles appertaining to his toilette.

Now it happened that on one occasion, just as our dentist was about to visit Gerania, the donkey cast a foal, and was therefore in no condition to take the usual journey. Struthion, in consequence, hired another to take him so far as his resting-place for the first night, and the owner of the substituted donkey followed on foot to bring his beast safe back again. The way lay through a tedious expanse of heath and open country, and it being the height of summer the heat was intense—in truth, it was so insupportable, that the poor dentist sighed for the shade, where he might repose and for a time enjoy the fresh breeze, and obtain a little water; but, far and wide, no prospect of such luxury could be seen. Vainly did he look around for trees, shade, or water. At last, quite

worn out, and parched with thirst, he bethought himself of dismounting, and lay down accordingly in the shadow of the ass.

"Now, sir," said the donkey-driver, "what are you doing?"

"I am sitting a little in the shade," said Struthion, "for the heat is insupportable."

"No! no! my good sir, that is no part of our bargain! You only hired the ass, and not its shadow—not one word was said about that."

"Why," replied the dentist, smiling, "I only sat myself down for a moment in the shade, because the sunbeams almost split my head, and every one knows that the shadow goes with the ass."

"But, by Jason!" exclaimed the driver, fiercely, "that is not what I understood;—the ass is one thing, the shadow another. You hired the ass at so much a day, and had you wished for the shadow also, you should have said so. In a word, sir, get up, and agree to pay me what is reasonable for the use of the shadow, or go on with your journey."

"What!" said the dentist, jeeringly; "I have paid you for the ass, and must I pay you for its shadow? Call me a double-distilled donkey myself, if I do anything of the kind! The

animal is decidedly mine for the whole day, and I will sit in its shadow as often as I wish, and remain there as long as I like, that you may depend upon!"

"Is that really your determination?" said the other, with all the coolness of a Thracian donkey-driver.

"It is truly so," answered Struthion, looking at him earnestly.

"Get up, I say, then!" cried the master, "and return at once to Abdera, where you shall soon learn who is right! So may the God of Gardens be good to me and my ass, as I stand up for our rights! You shall see if you are to cheat me out of the shadow without paying me for it!"

The dentist was greatly disposed to let his antagonist feel the justice of his cause through the strength of his arm; he clenched his fists, he raised his hand, and looking closely at his rough antagonist, he—let it fall again, and determined to try milder measures. But as the Thracian stood out for the hire of the shadow, and as the dentist was equally resolved not to pay him, there remained no other means than to go back to Abdera, and to lay the matter before the police-magistrate.

CHAPTER II.

Proceedings before the city magistrate.

THE city magistrate Philippides, before whom all questions of this nature were brought in the first instance, was a man of many admirable qualities, honourable, moderate, industrious, and of sound judgment. He always listened to litigants with the greatest attention, and gave the best counsel on both sides; in fact, he was, according to common report, irreproachable. Besides all this, he was a good musician, a practical naturalist, and a clever dramatist. He had composed a play which had, according to the custom of the country, been extremely applauded, and in such high estimation was he held, that it seemed probable, at the first vacancy, he would become nomophylax himself. The worthy Philippides had, however, one small fault, which was, that whenever two parties went before him to prefer a complaint, the one who

spoke last seemed to him always to be in the right. The Abderites were not stupid enough for this failing to escape them; but they thought it only reasonable to pardon one defect in a man who had so many good qualities. Indeed, they often said that, were it not for this failing, Philippides would be the best police-magistrate that Abdera ever boasted. Meantime, the very fact that both parties appeared to him to be in the right, had this good result; he was always disposed to reconcile those who brought their cases before him, and thus the simplicity of the excellent Philippides would have been a real blessing to Abdera had it not been for the watchfulness of the sycophants, who were but ill satisfied with his peace-making propensities, and they, in almost every case, contrived to render his endeavours nugatory.

The dentist Struthion, and the ass-driver Anthrax, both ran breathlessly to lay their complaint before this worthy magistrate. He heard both sides with his usual patience, and when all had been urged, and the wranglers themselves were exhausted, he shrugged his shoulders and declared that he had never heard so intricate a case before, saying to the men, "Pray, which of you is the actual complainant?"

"I am," said Struthion, "for that fellow" (pointing to Anthrax) "has broken his contract."

"And I," said the latter, "have just reason to complain of the dentist for refusing to compensate me for a portion of my property which he monopolized without my consent; I only let him the ass, and not its shadow."

"Truly," said the judge, smiling, "here are two plaintiffs, but no defendant,—a most extraordinary suit. State the matter to me once more, gentlemen, if you please, and with all its circumstances; speak one at a time, or it will be impossible for me to make either head or tail of it."

"Honourable my lord judge," said the dentist, "I hired the ass for one day's use. It is true no mention was made of the shadow; but who ever heard of a separate charge being made for that? By Hercules! this is surely not the first ass that has been hired in Abdera."

"The dentist speaks truly," said the magistrate.

"Indeed I do, sir," vociferated Struthion loudly, "and the ass and its shadow go together; and why should not he who hires one have the full enjoyment of the other? The shadow is an accessory."

"That is clear," observed the judge.

"And I," said the proprietor, "am only a common man who understands nothing of your *aries* and *ories*; but this I do know, that I have my five senses, and they tell me that I am not to let my donkey be kept standing all day in the sun while this man lies down in the shadow. I," continued he, "let the gentleman my ass, for which he paid me half in advance—that I acknowledge; but the ass is one thing, and the shadow another."

"True, also," murmured the judge.

"Now, will he agree to pay half as much for it as for the ass? He ought to do so, sir," said the driver, "and I hope you will help me to what is my due."

"The best conclusion, my friends, that I can arrive at," said Philippides, "is for you both to shake hands, go to your respective homes, and trouble yourselves no more about such profound nonsense. You, Anthrax, as an honest man, forget the ass-shadow, for you cannot be so short-witted as not to know that the shadow goes with the substance; and you, Struthion, suppose you give him a trifle to send him off satisfied?"

"Not I," answered the dentist; "I would not

give him the fourth part of an obolus. I demand my right."

"And I," cried his opponent, "also stand up for mine, for if the ass is my own, surely so is its shadow, and I can use or dispose of them both as I choose; and as you will hear nothing of right or equity, my demand is now for twice as much, and I am resolved to see whether or not justice is to be found in Abdera."

The judge, in great perplexity and anxiety, and not knowing how to gain time, called out, "Where is the ass?"

"At the gate, sir," said the owner.

"Fetch him into the courtyard, then," said Philippides. The owner heard this command joyfully, as he thought it was favourable to his cause that the judge wished to see the principal party in the affair. The donkey was accordingly introduced, and it was a pity that he could not speak his mind in the case; but he stood passively, looking quietly around, and then pricking up his ears first at both the litigants then regarding his master with more attention, then making a motion with his mouth, and again dropping his ears without a single bray.

"There, honoured sir," said Anthrax, "say now if the shadow of so noble an animal, between friends, is not worth a couple of drachmas, at least on so sultry a day as the present."

"Come, come," said Philippides, "let us end this foolish affair." So mild and persuasive were his remonstrances, that both the complainants were on the point of giving in, when unluckily two of the most cunning sycophants in Abdera, Physignathus and Polyphonus, made their appearance, and, after informing themselves of the nature of the affair from the ass-driver, soon succeeded in giving a different complexion to the business.

"Mr. Struthion is perfectly in the right," said Physignathus, who knew the dentist to be a tolerably rich, but a very irritable and obstinate man. The other parasite, rather annoyed that his partner in the trade had forestalled him, cast a side glance at the ass, and, after pronouncing it to be a fine, well-formed animal, spoke up most energetically for its master.

Neither party now desired to hear any more of the peaceable suggestions of the good Philippides, who perceived with regret that another investigation of this unimportant but tedious

case must be commenced. Consequently each man went home to confer with his friend ; but the ass, accompanied by its shadow, the cause of the litigation, was driven to the common stable of Abdera, there to await the termination of the business.

CHAPTER III.

How both parties removed the matter in dispute before a higher tribunal.

ALL disputes concerning money or property among the common people of Abdera, were investigated and decided on by a committee of twenty jurymen, who assembled three times a week in the portico of the temple of Nemesis. Everything before this court was conducted in writing, with a due regard to the interests of the sycophants; and as Abderite justice proceeded very much in the spiral direction, at a snail's pace, and almost as rapidly as a snail's gallop, and as no restriction was put on the length of the pleadings, but the sycophants went on till they had nothing more to say, the papers were generally as lengthy as the means of the litigants seemed likely to pay for. Fortunately there seemed many circumstances

which together made it probable that this case would be speedily decided; and hence it is not so much to be wondered at that in less than four months the matter was so far advanced that a decision was rather confidently expected on the next hearing. A judicial investigation respecting an ass's shadow would doubtless be an amusing topic anywhere: imagine, then, how interesting in Abdera. Scarcely was it announced, when everybody caught the subject, and talked of nothing else. All social matters gave way to it, and the interest felt was the same as if every citizen had his whole fortune suspended on the issue.

Some declared themselves in favour of the dentist, others for the ass-driver, and even the donkey himself had *his* partisans, who considered that the animal ought to be permitted to plead by his next friend, since he was himself the most aggrieved party through the use made of his shadow by the dentist while he stood scorching in the sun. The fact was, the said ass had cast his shadow over Abdera: the matter excited as much interest as if the prosperity of the commonwealth depended upon it; and these vicissitudes can astonish no one who has by means of the foregoing

pages made himself acquainted with the Abderites and their mode of action. Yet as there are some readers who are never satisfied unless they are made acquainted with even the slightest causes which have led to great events, we shall be doing to such students of history an agreeable service, if we somewhat more circumstantially relate how it came about that a law-suit between two extremely insignificant persons, and for an object of the most unimportant character, did in no very remote degree conduce to the destruction of the republic itself.

The commonalty of Abdera was, like that of most other States, divided into guilds, and, by reason of an old observance, Struthion belonged to the guild of cordwainers. The observance in question was, like most Abderite observances, grounded on an extremely far-fetched logic. In the early days of the republic this fraternity embraced only shoemakers and cobblers, but after a time the term cobbler began to be understood in an enlarged sense, and thus, at last, physicians, and all who practised any branch of the medical profession, were included in it, as being, in point of fact, "*cobblers of men.*"

In consequence of this arrangement, Struthion had on his side the whole cordwainers' company, the physicians alone excepted, with whom he was always on the very worst of terms, and these, as will be remembered, made a very considerable part of the population of Abdera. To the heads of his company the dentist naturally looked for favour, and above all to the head of the guild, the distinguished Mr. Awl, whose patriotic zeal can be unknown to none who have read these pages. This gentleman declared himself with his accustomed warmth on the side of Struthion, and openly averred that he would rather stab himself to the heart with the instrument of his trade, and from which he derived his name, than allow the rights and privileges of Abdera to be violated in the person of one of his own guild.

"Equity," he said, "is the first principle of law, and what can be more reasonable than this, that he who plants a tree, although he plants it for the sake of its fruit, should enjoy the exclusive use of the shadow also? and how can that which holds good of a tree fail when the principle comes to be applied to an ass? What the plague would become of our freedom, should any citizen of Abdera not be allowed

to repose as freely in his donkey's shadow as he might in that of the town-hall, or that of Jason's temple, where it is manifest that he may be as much and as often as he chooses? A shadow is a shadow and nothing else, whether it be that of a tree, an edifice, or an ass, or, with reverence be it spoken, that of the most excellent archon himself. In a word," said the guildmaster, seating himself, "put yourself into my hands, and that low-bred fellow shall not only give up his demand for the shadow, but for the use of the ass also; or neither freedom nor right of possession will hereafter be recognized in Abdera, a state of things which, by all the elements, shall never be the case, so long as I remain at the head of the company of cordwainers!"

The dentist having thus secured the patronage of so powerful a man, the ass-driver, on the other hand, did not neglect to obtain the support of one whose weight in the commonwealth was at least equal. Anthrax was, in point of fact, not a citizen of Abdera at all, but only a sort of free settler, who chiefly supported himself within the circuit of Jason's temple, and as such was under the jurisdiction and protection of the arch-priest of this hero,

who, as is well known, was especially revered and worshipped in Abdera. His first thought was therefore, naturally, to acquaint the arch-priest Agathysus with his difficulty; but then the arch-priest of Jason was in Abdera a person of great consideration, and it was scarcely to be hoped that an ass-driver could obtain an introduction to an individual of such exalted rank, unless through some peculiar channel.

Anthrax, after many consultations with his best friends, at last thought of an expedient by which he might effect his purpose. His wife Crobyle was acquainted with a milliner whose brother was a great favourite with the lady's-maid of a certain Milesian dancer, who, as report said, ranked very high in the estimation of the arch-priest. Unfortunately the ministers of Jason's temple were forbidden to marry, but the world whispered suspiciously, though freely, on the subject. The truth was, the priest was an extravagant admirer of pantomimic solo-dancing; but, to prevent the slightest cause for suspicion, he sedulously avoided seeing the lady by daylight, and only permitted her occasional visits to his study in the evening, and through a small side-door which led into his garden. Now, as certain persons had in the dim twilight

of the morning seen a thickly-veiled person go out through this door, there arose a vague rumour that it must be the dancer in question, and that the arch-priest had formed a very decided partiality for her; and indeed, had this been so, and Agathysus been anything else than the arch-priest, probably very little would have been said about it. Be this as it may, however, certain it is that the donkey-driver spoke with his wife, his wife with the dressmaker, the dressmaker with her brother, her brother with the lady's-maid, the lady's maid with her mistress; and as this last was all-powerful with the arch-priest, who on his part was all-powerful with the magistrates of Abdera and their ladies, Anthrax concluded, and not altogether without reason, that he had placed his business in the best hands in the world.

But it unfortunately happened that the waiting-maid had registered a solemn vow not to give her aid gratis, any more than Anthrax himself would give the shade of his donkey. She had a kind of tariff, in accordance with which the slightest service which could be required of her was valued at precisely four drachmas, and in the present case she was the less disposed to abate even half a drachma, in-

asmuch as it was a considerable letting-down of her dignity to become a politician in a cause the principal character in which was—an ass. In short, our Iris stood out for her four drachmas, which was just double what the poor suitor, even in the event of his gaining his suit, hoped to win by it. Again he felt himself in great perplexity, for could he hope that a humble ass-driver (with nothing to assist him but the justice of his cause) should succeed against a wealthy opponent supported by a whole community? Indeed, he knew that Struthion boasted everywhere that the victory was already in his hands. At length, after great anxiety, the worthy Anthrax thought of another scheme to influence the arch-priest in his favour, without the interposition of the dancer or her abigail; and its greatest advantage was that he had not far to seek for it.

To come to the point, he had a daughter named Sorgo, to whom, with the savings of his industry, he had given a tolerable musical education, hoping she would repay him what he had disbursed for her by making some good and permanent theatrical engagement. She was a decent singer, a good guitar-player, and had a fine figure, and, though not exactly one

of the handsomest, her large black eyes and the fresh bloom of youth made up, at least in the estimation of Anthrax, what she wanted in more regular charms. On festival-days, with her shining braided hair, and nosegay in her bosom, she resembled one of Anacreon's Thracian virgins, and it was soon found that the arch-priest Agathysrus was fond of good guitar-playing and ballad-singing, in both which accomplishments the pretty songstress had some claims to proficiency, so that now the good Anthrax and his excellent wife thought their daughter's talents might be made of some account. At the same time they thought, as another auxiliary, it would be wise also for Anthrax to cultivate the friendship of the arch-priest's valet, while Crobyle instructed her daughter how to act so that she might in time supersede the dancer and remain the undisputed mistress of the garden-door.

The thing succeeded exactly as they wished. The valet, who was sometimes at his wits' end to satisfy the *penchant* of his master for variety, seized with both hands this auspicious opportunity, and the young Sörgo played her part wonderfully well for a beginner. Agathysrus found in her a charming mixture of simplicity and

self-will, and a sort of wild grace, which pleased him, because he had never seen anything like it before. In short, she had scarcely sung three times in the cabinet of Agathyrus before Anthrax was given to understand, on perfectly reliable authority, that the arch-priest had already employed several eminent counsel on his behalf, and had expressed with some zeal his determination that a dependant of Jason's temple should not be borne down and sacrificed by the chicanery of the sycophant Physignathus, and the partiality of the guildmaster Awl.

CHAPTER IV.

Judicial proceedings.—Report of the assessor.—Miltias' judgment.—And of what followed therefrom.

IN the mean time, the important day had arrived on which this remarkable case was to be decided. The sycophants had done their part, and the pleadings were now laid before a referee, by name Miltias, concerning whose impartiality the enemies of the dentist had very serious misgivings. It could not be denied that he was on terms of the closest intimacy with the sycophant Physignathus, and beyond this it had been somewhat severely commented upon that Mrs. Struthion, one of the handsomest women of her class, had several times personally recommended to him the case of her husband. But as all these things furnished no legal ground of objection, and as Miltias was the proper judge

by rotation, affairs went on in their proper order.

Miltias set forth the history of the dispute so circumstantially, and gave the reasons for all his views so much in detail, and with so much impartiality, that for a long while the hearers were in doubt which way he would at last decide. He did not deny that there was much to be said on both sides. On the one hand, he observed, nothing could be clearer than that he who hired the ass, the principal, hired also the ass's shadow, the accessorium; that this was, in point of fact, tacitly implied, or, if any objection should be taken to this implied contract, still that the shadow followed the body of itself, so that the enjoyment of the shadow naturally belonged to him who had secured to himself the use of the substance; the more so, as not the least damage was done thereby to the essence and substance of the ass. On the other hand, it seemed not less clear, that though the shadow might be regarded either as an essential or circumstantial portion of the ass, yet it would by no means follow that the hirer of the one should be construed into being also the hirer of the other, notwithstanding that the aforesaid shadow could not be taken by itself, or without

the before-mentioned ass. He observed that the shadow of an ass was, philosophically considered, nothing less than a shadowy ass, and as the proprietor of the bodily ass was also the proprietor of the shadowy one, it was irrational to imagine that he should, without remuneration, let or give over the one to the hirer of the other. But, besides all this, if it were allowed that the shadow was only the *accessorium* of the living and more obvious donkey, yet the hirer does not obtain a right to every possible use of the ass, but only to that specified in the contract, viz. the journey agreed upon, and without which use the contract could not be carried out.

But, amongst all the laws of Abdera, nothing could be found distinctly bearing upon the subject, and the judgment of the court had therefore to be given upon the merits of the case. All the ingenuity of the lawyers was in consequence strained to the utmost, to prove whether a shadow was one of those common things to which every one has an equal right, or one of those in which an exclusive property could be established. In default of positive enactment, the custom of the whole human race may be reasonably taken as having the force of law, and

as being, in fact, a true oracle of Nature herself. Now, according to this custom, shadows are to be regarded as among those things which, like light, air, sunshine, are free and common to all, things in which no exclusive possession can be maintained.

This principle being laid down—and Miltias took care that it should be supported by a host of arguments, which we shall willingly spare the reader—it followed, as a matter of course, that the shadows of all the asses in Thrace were as free to the use of any one who could make use of them as the shadow of Mount Athos itself, that he who sat down in any shadow became for a time the possessor of it, and that the right ceased with the possession. In consequence of this it further followed that such shadows could not be the subjects of bargain and sale, of gift or bequest, and therefore not of letting or hiring.

These principles being applied to the suit of the ass-driver Anthrax against the dentist Struthion, it appeared that the latter had enjoyed a full right to the use of the shadow of the plaintiff's donkey, and the wise Miltias decided that Anthrax should not only be compelled to withdraw his claim for a separate sum, as hire

of the ass's shadow, but also be condemned in all the costs of this action.

We leave the decision of the sage Miltias to the consideration of the right-minded reader, and as we have resolved in the whole case to give no opinion ourselves, but to act the part only of a perfectly impartial historian, we shall be content with observing that it had been the custom in Abdera from time immemorial for the decision of the assessor, in all cases tried before the civil high court of justice, to be ratified either by the unanimous voice of the dicasts present, or at least by a great majority of them. At all events, no instance to the contrary had occurred for more than a century, and indeed it is difficult to imagine how such an instance should occur. For during the summing-up, which usually was rather a prolix matter, these gentlemen, who were, in fact, both judges and jury, were either staring out of the windows, or doing anything rather than attending to the business before them. Some indeed went bodily out of the court, paid visits to the neighbouring taverns, or called on their lady friends. Nor was the case very much better with those that remained, for they spent their time in whispering one to another, or falling asleep downright over the

pleadings. In short, there was established a kind of tacit compromise between the referee and the assessors, and it was only a matter of mere form that a few minutes before the former pronounced the final sentence, the latter should rise up each in his place, and confirm with becoming zeal the conclusion which had just been laid before the court.

But this law-suit of the ass's shadow had the distinguished honour done to it, that all the dicasts (except, perhaps, three or four who had promised their voices beforehand to the dentist, and would not give up their right of sleeping through the proceedings), not only kept together, but kept awake, as indeed was only due to so interesting a cause: and thus, when their votes came to be collected, it turned out that the judgment was ratified by a majority of only twelve against eight.

As soon as the proclamation of the verdict had been made, Polyphonus, the plaintiff's advocate, did not fail to raise his voice, and, declaring the decision unjust, partial, and null and void through legal inaccuracies, to appeal to the great council of Abdera. Now as the suit itself was about a matter which was only of the alleged value of two drachmas, and, even when all the

costs were added, was still within the amount required to render an appeal legal, there arose a great tumult in the court. The minority declared that it was not with them a question of money, but of right; that it concerned the very principle of property; and that, as no law existed upon the subject, it ought to be brought before the assembly of law-givers as the only body which, in such a case, could properly decide.

How it happened that the assessor, with all his zeal for the plaintiff, thought nothing of this question, or that his opponent's counsel would raise this pretext for the grand council to proceed upon, we can only account for on the ground that he was an Abderite, and, according to the custom of his townsmen, looked only on one side of a case, and that always the uppermost one. In this particular instance, perhaps, a further reason might be given for his having acted so carelessly, viz. that he had spent a great part of the preceding night at a banquet, and on his return the wife of Struthion succeeded in obtaining an audience of no small length, not adding greatly thereby to his night's rest.

At last, after much discussion, the city magistrate, Philippides, intimated that he should

bring the question whether the appeal should be permitted or not before the senate. So saying he rose, the members of the court dispersed rather tumultuously, and the plaintiff and defendant betook themselves, with their advocates, friends, and partisans, to consider what was to be done next.

CHAPTER V.

Opinions of the senate.—Virtue of the fair Sorgo, and its effects.—The priest Strobilus appears on the stage, and the matter becomes serious.

THE suit concerning the ass's shadow had at first amused the Abderites, and attracted their attention, only by its absurdity; but it had now become a matter in which their notions of right and wrong, and in fact their ideas of national honour, were involved.

The guildmaster Awl had taken it into his head that the member of *his* company must gain his cause, and as he spent almost every evening in gatherings of the people either for pleasure or business, he had already gained wellnigh half the citizens to his way of thinking, and his party was daily on the increase.

On the other hand, the arch-priest had not till now considered the matter weighty enough to require much exertion on his part on behalf

of his dependant; but now, the affair between him and the young Sorgo began to assume a more serious aspect, as, instead of a certain docility which he expected to find in her, he encountered a resistance which neither her parentage nor her education would have led any one to look for.

Indeed, as the young lady began to talk about the danger to her reputation which her frequent exits and entrances by the little garden-door might occasion, it seems by no means unnatural that Agathyrus might think it worth while to interest himself a little more warmly in the cause of the father, if it were only to merit the gratitude of the daughter. The revived commotion which the reference of the case to the great council had made in the law-suit, gave him an opportunity of speaking on the subject with some of his own most particular friends in the senate. "However ridiculous the thing may be in itself, we must not allow a poor man living under the protection of Jason to be oppressed by a cabal." "The insignificancy of the original cause of dispute ought not," he said, "to be regarded, for this was not unfrequently the case with things of the greatest importance, but rather the spirit in which the matter had been undertaken, and the ulterior intentions which

were expressed, or at least entertained, in the case. Besides which it was quite time that the insolence of the sycophant Physignathus, who was most of all to blame for the scandal, should receive a check, and the tight rein be applied a little to that ambitious and overbearing demagogue, the guildmaster Awl, before he had succeeded in quite overthrowing the aristocracy of his native city."

It is only due to truth to observe that there were in the beginning of the controversy some who regarded the thing from a right point of view, and who expressed great contempt for the worthy police-magistrate Philippides that he had not strangled so ridiculous a suit in its birth; but even these gradually altered their opinion, and the enthusiasm, not to say fanaticism, which had already seized upon a large part of the people, began to make its way among the *savants* also. Some dated the change in their views from the time when a man of so much consequence as Agathyrus became deeply and evidently interested in it, others from the period when they saw that there was danger to the aristocracy from the ascendancy of the guildmaster Awl.

Many embraced the side of the ass-driver out

of pure opposition, and many more because they really believed that a great wrong had been done to him ; while, on the other hand, not a few declared for the dentist because certain persons with whom they did not choose to hold one opinion in common, had pronounced themselves on the opposite side.

Notwithstanding all this, however, the absurd contention would never have been carried to so great a height among the Abderites—Abderites though they were—as to have any perceptible effect on the commonwealth, had not the evil genius of the republic, in the shape of the priest Strobilus, stepped forward and mingled in the fray, with no greater cause so to do than the unquietness of his natural disposition and his hatred to Agathyrsus.

In order to make this the clearer to the amiable reader, we must do as the old poet did with his Iliad—we must begin "*ab ovo*," that is, from the beginning ; and the more so as this will be the only way to make intelligible certain passages in the history of Euripides, and certain expressions which fell from the lips of Strobilus against the great naturalist Democritus.

CHAPTER VI.

The proportions of the temple of Latona compared with those of the temple of Jason.—Contrast between the characters of Strobilus and Agathyrus.—Strobilus declares in favour of Struthion, and is supported by Salabanda, who begins to play a conspicuous part in the farce.

THE worship of Latona was, as Strobilus had informed Euripides, as old in Abdera as the transplantation of the Lycian colony, and the extreme simplicity which characterized the architecture of her little temple might reasonably be appealed to as a convincing proof of the fact.

However insignificant was the exterior of the shrine, the regular endowments of the priesthood were fully as unpretending. But as necessity is the mother of invention, these gentlemen had long since found out a way, by setting the superstition of the Abderites to work, to indem-

nify themselves for the very limited amount of their statutable incomes; and as these were • clearly insufficient, they had succeeded in persuading the senate, which would never have increased their allowances by any augmentation specially devoted to that purpose, to set apart certain funds for the preservation of the holy frog-pools. It need hardly be said that the grateful and right-minded frogs left by far the larger part of such sums for the use of their conservators.

Very different were the circumstances of the temple of Jason, that renowned leader of the Argonauts, to whom in Abdera only was divine worship offered, and a place given among the greater gods.

We are not aware of any other grounds for this distinction, save that several of the oldest and richest families in Abdera traced their descent up to that hero. One of his grandsons had, as tradition asserted, settled down in that city and become the common father of several distinct lines, of which more than one were in full prosperity at the time of the present history. To honour the memory of the hero from whom they descended, they had at first consecrated a small chapel. With the progress of time this

grew into a kind of open temple, which the piety of the Jasonians had gradually provided with sufficient revenues. At last, when Abdera had become, through a series of fortunate circumstances, one of the richest cities in Thrace, the families of his blood determined to build to their deified ancestor a temple whose beauty should be at once an honour to their city and a wonder to posterity.

The new temple of Jason was a glorious work, and, with its dependent buildings, offices, asylum, and residences for the priests, together with its appropriate groves and gardens, made an entire quarter of the city. The arch-priest was required by statute to be always one of the members of the oldest Jasonian family, and as he had not only considerable revenues in virtue of his office, but also a supremacy over all persons and things connected with the temple, it is easy to imagine that the chief priest of Latona did not look with an eye of indifference on all these advantages. A sort of rivalry soon established itself between these prelates; their successors kept it up jealously, and on every suitable occasion it was sure to be manifested.

The chief priest of Latona was undoubtedly the head of the Abderite clergy; only the arch-

priest of Jason was not under his rule, but constituted with his dependants a separate college, which, save its acknowledgment of the laws of the city, was free from all control. The festival of Latona was the pre-eminent fast-day of the republic; but as the smallness of the temple revenues admitted but of little display, it came to pass that the feast of Jason, which was celebrated with extraordinary magnificence, was, in the eyes of the people, if not the most venerable, at least the most enjoyable, and all the reverence which they felt for Latona, and all the respect which they entertained for her priests and the holy frogs, could not prevent the arch-priests of Jason from making a greater figure and obtaining thereby a greater amount of consideration; and although the common people had probably more inclination towards the priests of Latona, yet even this was counterbalanced by the close connection existing between the arch-priest of Jason and the most aristocratic houses in the State. In short, a man in this position necessarily possessed such influence, that were he ambitious he might easily have made himself a sort of tyrant over the city.

Now, to all these hereditary causes of jealousy and rivalry between the heads of the Abderite

clergy, the present incumbents, Strobilus and Agathysus, added a personal enmity, which was the natural result of their very different ways of thinking.

Agathysus was far more a man of the world than a priest—of the latter he had indeed little more than the robes; the love of pleasure was his ruling passion, for though he was not wanting in pride no one could accuse him of ambition, so long as he allowed other inclinations to overrule that feeling. He loved the arts and familiar converse with virtuosi of all kinds, and had the reputation of being one of those priests who have little belief even in their own gods. At least, it must be confessed that he was partial to a rather free joke on the holy frogs of Latona, and there were persons found willing to swear that they had heard from his own lips the declaration, "that the frogs of that goddess had long ago been changed into wretched poets and Abderite singers."

That he lived on tolerably pleasant terms with Democritus, was not a fact calculated to increase the opinion of his orthodoxy.

In short, Agathysus was a man of good temperament, clear head, and rather free life, a favourite with the Abderite nobility, a still greater

favourite with the fair sex, and, on account of his open-handed liberality and stately Jasonian presence, almost as much a favourite with the lowest classes of the people.

Now Nature, in her most whimsical moment, had never formed a man more completely the antipodes of all this than was Strobilus. He had found by experience, as many like him have done, that a mortified countenance and a sanctimonious manner are infallible means, with the great majority of what are called religious people, of obtaining the character of a wise and pious man.

As Nature had furnished his visage with more than a reasonable amount of vinegar, it cost him very little to assume those manners which, to those who can look beneath the surface, signify nothing more than a limited understanding and an indomitable obstinacy. Without any taste for the sublime and beautiful, he was a born despiser of all the arts and sciences which develop that taste, and his hatred to philosophy was only the natural dislike of a stupid bigot towards all which was wiser and better than himself. In his decisions he was crooked and partial, in his opinions unreasonable, in controversy rude and vehement, and, whenever he believed himself to

be insulted or injured, either in his own person or in that of the holy frogs of Latona, to the utmost degree vindictive. With all this he was not the less submissive, even to meanness, when he could only obtain what he desired by the help of a person whom he hated. In addition, there seemed some ground for the opinion generally held of him, that, in any matter not altogether inconsistent with his character, he might easily be brought to reason by proper doses of golden daries or philips.

From such opposite elements, especially when the many circumstances of jealousy attached to, and indeed inseparable from, their respective positions, are taken into consideration, it will not be thought strange that a mutual hatred should arise, which was restrained with difficulty, and only kept within bounds at all by a great contempt on the part of Agathyrsus, which prevented his hatred to the chief priest from reaching the limits which it otherwise would have done, and from the energy which made it impossible for Strobilus to despise the arch-priest of Jason so much as he would fain have wished.

To all this must be added one more point of contrast. Agathyrsus, by reason of his birth and social position, belonged to the aristocracy;

Strobilus, notwithstanding his relations with certain senators, was a declared partisan of the democracy, and, next to the guildmaster Awl, was the very person who, by his character, weight, enthusiastic feeling, and a certain taking kind of popular eloquence, had the greatest influence with the *demos*.

It may easily be supposed that the affair of the ass's shadow became a more serious one, as soon as a few men, such as the principal priests of Abdera, mingled with it.

Strobilus, so long as the suit had been carried on before the ordinary tribunals, had taken no other part in it than declaring, from time to time, that he in such a case would have acted precisely as the dentist had done ; but as soon as he learned through his niece, the Lady Salabanda, that Agathyrus had made the interests of his *protégé*, however he might appear at first to despise them, really and earnestly his own, he felt it his duty to place himself at once at the head of the opposite party, and to support the guildmaster by all the influence which he had either with the senate or with the people.

Salabanda was too much accustomed to have a hand in all public business in Abdera, to be the last to take her part in such a matter as

the present. Besides her near relationship to the priest Strobilus, she had another reason to make common cause with him,—a reason not the less powerful for being kept to herself. We have mentioned on another occasion that this lady, out of mere political considerations, or, it may be, out of a little coquetry—and who shall say how far these two may not be sometimes mingled together?—thought fit always to have about her a number of willing slaves, among whom, mischievous people said, there must surely be one or another who knew what he served her for. Now the scandalous chronicle of Abdera asserted that Agathyrus had at one time the honour to be one of these last, and, in point of fact, there were a number of circumstances which rendered such a report not altogether undeserving of attention. In fact, a very close and affectionate friendship subsisted between them when the *ballerina* came to Abdera, and before long Salabanda saw plainly enough that the fickle son of Jason had offered her up on the altar of his new divinity.

Agathyrus visited her house on the same apparent footing as before, and the lady was a great deal too politic to give in her outward behaviour the least sign of change. But in her heart

she nourished wrath. She did not forget what it was which had so deeply involved the arch-priest in the law-suit, and kept up his enthusiasm in it; secretly she tracked all his comings and goings—all doors open and shut, all approaches to his cabinet by day or night—till at last she found out all his intrigues with the young Sörgo, and was in a position to lay the story before the priest Strobilus. She enabled him to put the whole matter in as detestable a light as he pleased, choosing, for her own part, to use it with a view of rendering Agathysus ridiculous.

Agathysus, however little it cost him for the most part to sacrifice to his pleasures all sorts of political advantages, had his moments of obstinacy—moments in which a matter wherein he was at the bottom very little interested, could stir up all his pride; and whenever this took place his vivacity usually carried him a great deal further than he would have gone had he calmly and quietly reviewed the business. The reason which had at first induced him to mix himself up with so despicable a suit, no longer existed, for the young Sörgo, notwithstanding the advice of her mother, had either not manifested sufficient discretion, or not felt sufficient indifference to continue steadfast in resisting the

fascinations of so experienced a suitor as Agathyrus.

But he was now embarked in the cause ; his honour was concerned in its success. He had daily and nightly information how insolently the guildmaster and the priest with their followers discoursed about him, how they threatened, how high-handedly they hoped to carry their point, and the like ; and this was more than sufficient to induce him to employ all his energies for the overthrow of enemies whom he so completely despised, and to chastise them for the very insolence of having attempted to oppose him.

Notwithstanding the cabal of the Lady Salabanda, which was not sufficiently fine-spun to be long concealed from him, he had the greater part of the senate on his side ; and though his opponents left nothing untried to exasperate the people against him, yet he had partisans enough, especially in the guilds of butchers, braziers, and tanners, to be very formidable, from the power of their lungs and the strength of their arms, whenever either shouting or striking was required.

CHAPTER VII.

All Abdera divides itself into two parties.—The business comes before the council.

IN the state of fermentation in which the whole city found itself, the two parties gradually came to be known by the respective, if not respectful, appellations of Asses and Shadows. How this came about it is not easy to show, but probably because so great parties could not go much longer without any names. The favourites of the dentist, remembering their right to the shadow, called themselves by its name, and out of contempt applied that of asses to their opponents. Now, as the followers of the arch-priest could not hinder the people from making the distinction, and as they gradually became accustomed to it themselves, they accepted the terms with good-nature, only turning

the point of the weapon against their adversaries, by connecting all that was ridiculous with the shadow, and all that was honourable with the ass: for they observed, justly enough, if a man had only the choice of being one or the other, he would much rather be a living donkey with all his belongings than the mere shadow of one. However this may be, certain it was, that in a few days all Abdera was divided into these two parties; and as soon as a name was found for them, so great was the jealousy and party-spirit displayed, that no one was allowed to remain neutral. "Are you a Shadow or an Ass?" was the first question put by the common citizens to one another, when they met in the street or at the tavern; and if a Shadow was so luckless as to be the only one of his kind among a number of Asses, his only ultimatum was, unless he could save himself by a timely retreat, either to apologize on the spot, or to be turned out of doors with every mark of contempt. Indeed, so great was the bitterness engendered by the dispute, that a genuine Shadow would rather perish with hunger, and join the Stygian shades in earnest, than buy a threepenny loaf of a baker of the Asses' party.

The women too, as may easily be imagined, took up the dispute, and that not with less warmth than the other sex: indeed, the first blood which was shed in the contest was drawn forth by the nails of two hucksters who fell upon each other's physiognomy in the open market. It was, however, remarked, that by far the greater portion of the Abderite ladies declared themselves on the side of the arch-priest; and where in any house the man was a Shadow, there it might be almost certainly depended upon that the wife was an Ass, and generally as enthusiastic and uncompromising a donkey as can be well imagined.

Among many lamentable as well as many ridiculous consequences of this party-spirit among the ladies, not the least remarkable was that a great many courtships were broken off quite suddenly, because the self-willed Shadow chose rather to give up his betrothed than his party, and on the contrary a great many were brought to a happy termination, after many years' hopeless pursuit, simply because the now-fortunate suitor avowed himself to be an Ass.

In the mean time the question whether the suit should be brought before the great council of the State, was debated in the senate; and although this was the first time that the venera-

ble body had been summoned to deliberate on so ridiculous an affair as an ass's shadow, yet each member had already taken his part. The archon Onolaus was the only person who appeared in doubt how he could give the matter a decent appearance. It was observed that he spoke much lower than usual, and at the close of his address he uttered these remarkable and ominous words:—"He feared much lest this ass's shadow, which was now the subject of so much contention, would darken the fame of the republic for centuries to come. His opinion was, that the appeal should be refused, the decree of the court below affirmed; that each party should bear his own costs; and that the whole matter should be buried in eternal oblivion. In the mean time," he added, "that if the laws of Abdera were not, in the opinion of the majority, sufficient to decide so contemptible a case, the great council must take the matter in hand, though he would strongly recommend that a strict search should be first made through the archives of the courts, in order to see if any cause at all similar had occurred before, and, if so, how it had been decided."

The moderation of the archon, which by impartial posterity will secure to him the repu-

tation of true administrative wisdom, was then, when party-spirit had blinded all eyes, only looked on as a proof of weakness and criminal indifference to the welfare of the republic. Several senators of the arch-priest's party at once began with great zeal to exclaim thus :—
“ Nothing ought to be called contemptible which concerned the freedom of Abdera. If there were no law on the subject there could be no lawful mode of proceeding, and the very first instance in which the judges were permitted to decide a case according to their own arbitrary will, would put an end to the liberties of the State. If the subject of the contest were even yet more contemptible than it was, the question was not how much or how little was the worth of the thing itself, but which of the parties was in the right ; and as no law had as yet decided whether the shadow of the ass were really though tacitly included in the bargain, so neither the law-courts nor the senate itself could without open tyranny undertake to award to the lessee a thing to which the lessor had at least as good a right, or rather indeed a far better one, as it by no means followed from the nature of the contract that it had been the intention of this latter to let the shadow of

the ass at all ;"—and a great deal more in the same strain. One of these gentlemen went so far as to say, in his enthusiastic party-spirit, that he had always been a zealous patriot, and ere he would permit that one of his fellow-citizens should be wrongfully deprived even of the shadow of an empty nutshell, he would see all Abdera in fire and flames.

At this Guildmaster-Awl lost all patience. "The fire," he exclaimed, "with which the State has been so insolently threatened, should rather be fed with the person of one who talks so foolishly. I am no scholar," said he, "but I know what is what, and do not buy horse-litter for spices. A man must have lost his senses altogether if he imagines a law to be necessary just to enable a person to sit in the shadow of a donkey, when he has just purchased with hard cash the right to sit on the donkey itself; and besides this, it is a sin and a shame that so many skilful and distinguished men should be wasting their time and puzzling their brains about a matter that any child might settle in a quarter of an hour—for did ever anybody in all the world hear that shadows were among those things which men hired from one another?"

"The honourable gentleman," replied the senator Euphranor, "upsets his own argument in so speaking, for if the shadow of the donkey could not be hired, it follows as a matter of course that it *was* not hired; for he will permit me to remind him that *à non posse ad non esse valet consequentia*. The dentist can therefore, according to the honourable gentleman's own principles, have acquired no right to the shadow, and the judgment becomes null and void."

The guildmaster was posed, and as he did not see clearly how to answer this reasoning, he only talked the louder, and called heaven and earth to witness that he would rather tear out his grey beard hair by hair than let himself be made an ass of in his old age. The gentlemen of his party supported him with all their strength; but they were after all in a minority, and all they could obtain, by the help of the archon, and the senator of whom mention has been made before, was that the affair should remain *in statu quo* for a while till an investigation had been made into the archives of the courts, to see if there were any precedent according to which a suit of this great importance might be decided.

CHAPTER VIII.

Good condition of the Abderite Chancery Court.—

Precedents discovered which have no bearing upon the subject.—Determination of the people to storm the senate-house.—Their fury assuaged by Agathyrus.

—The senate determines to leave the matter to the great council.

THE chancery of Abdera (since we have now an opportunity of mentioning it we may despatch the subject in a very few words,) was as well arranged and managed as might reasonably be expected from so wise a republic. There were, however, two faults charged against it,—faults which it shared with many other institutions of the same nature, and about which, in Abdera at least, for some centuries past, daily complaints had been made, without the idea occurring to anybody that they might perhaps, in one way or another, be remedied.

One of these faults was that the archives and

acts lay treasured up in an extremely damp vault, where they perished from want of air, mouldered away, became moth-eaten, and at last were found to be totally illegible.

The other was, that, whatever information was sought for by means of them, the documents required to substantiate it could never be found. As often as this took place, some patriotic senator would probably remark, and for the most part with the acquiescence of the whole body, that "this arose solely from the want of care and order in the department of the record-office." Indeed, it would have been difficult to devise an hypothesis by which the phenomena in question could be more satisfactorily explained. On this account it almost invariably happened, when the council ordered a search into the archives, the result was—and all the parties concerned made themselves perfectly sure of the fact beforehand—that nothing was found! The customary declaration, therefore, that all diligent search had been made in the record-office, and nothing had been there discovered, was received with perfect apathy, as a conclusion which everybody had fully expected.

This had been accordingly the case with the

search made in the present action, whether there might not be found some precedents calculated to aid the courts in their decision. Nothing had been found, although several gentlemen in the last session had been positively certain that there must have been innumerable actions of a similar nature decided. Meantime the zeal of a certain counsellor of the party of the Asses had discovered the records of two old law-suits, which had once made some stir in Abdera, and seemed to have some little resemblance to the present action.

The one concerned a dispute between the possessors of two plots of ground within the precincts of the city, about the right to a little hillock which lay between them. The hillock in question was about five or six feet in circuit, and might in process of time have reached the dimensions of a moderate molehill. A thousand little circumstances had so embittered the feelings of the two families concerned in the dispute, that each had determined rather to risk house and home than yield up the right to this molehill. The Abderite courts of justice were the more puzzled how to decide, inasmuch as the evidence on both sides consisted of an innumerable host of small, doubtful, and obscure facts. In fact,

after litigation of more than five-and-twenty years, the affair was not a step the nearer to settlement, but was, on the contrary, just five-and-twenty times more incomprehensible than it was in the beginning.

In all probability the matter would never have been decided at all, had not both the parties to the suit found themselves at last compelled to make over the estates between which the molehill lay to their respective lawyers, by way of liquidating the costs of the action. As the right to the molehill itself was thus conveyed away, the two lawyers made a friendly compromise about it on the very day of possession—they consecrated the hillock to the goddess Themis, planted a fig-tree upon it, and under the fig-tree placed on a pedestal the image of the goddess, made of fir-wood and painted to look like stone. This they did at their joint expense, and the senate promulgated a decree that the possessors of the two estates should be bound ever after to keep at their common charge both statue and pedestal in good order.

Both remained to the present time, in remembrance of that ancient law-suit—the fig-tree green and flourishing, but the statue in a very decayed and worm-eaten condition.

The other law-suit appeared to have a still closer resemblance to that which at the moment occupied the attention of the Abderites. A citizen named Pamplius possessed an estate, the chief advantage of which was, that on its south-west side it looked over a beautiful valley which lay between two well-wooded mountains, the prospect being at last terminated by the sea. Pamplius was in the habit of saying that he would not lose this prospect for a hundred Attic talents, and he had all the more reason for rating it so high, inasmuch as the property itself was of so little value that no one who regarded its uses only would have given the twentieth part of such a sum for it.

Unfortunately a neighbour of his, on this very south-west side—a man tolerably well off in the world—thought fit to build a barn, in such a position as to take away at least four-fifths of the view, and thus, in the opinion of Pamplius, made the property less desirable to the value of eighty talents. Pamplius went to his neighbour, and very amicably entreated him to abstain from such an oppressive act; but the builder persisted in standing up for his *right* to build on his own land as he chose.

The subject was referred to law. Pamplius certainly could not prove that the prospect was an essential and indispensable part of his estate, or that his neighbour's barn shut out air and light from him, or that his grandfather, from whom the property came in a direct line to him, had given a single drachma more, on account of the prospect, than the land was worth in the time of Pamplius himself; neither could he assert that his neighbour was under any kind of engagement to him in virtue of which he was bound to pull down the barn at his desire.

Only his advocate contended that the real question at issue lay much deeper, and arose out of the original idea of all property. "If the air were not a transparent medium, Elysium and Olympus itself might be opposite my client's estate, and he would be able to enjoy the sight of them as little as though a high wall were built right up to the sky against his window. This transparent nature and peculiarity of the atmosphere is the first and true cause of that lovely prospect which renders my client's property so desirable. Now this free and transparent air is, as everybody knows, one of those common things which are equally the property

of all, and every unoccupied portion of it must be regarded as a *res nullius*, a thing which belongs to nobody, and, therefore, which becomes the property of him who first takes possession of it. From time immemorial the ancestors of my client have together with their estate possessed and enjoyed the prospect which is now in dispute, unhindered and uncontested by any man. They have therefore with their eyes occupied the thereunto-belonging portion of air, and through this occupation the aforesaid portion has become an essential part of the hereinbefore-mentioned estate, and no part of this, however small, can be taken away without bringing into danger of destruction every principle of law and rectitude."

The senate of Abdera found this reasoning very powerful. The litigation went on with great subtlety on both sides, and, as Pamplius himself was during the course of it elected into the senate, the cause became daily more and more intricate, and the arguments on his side all the more considerable. At last the farmer died without seeing any end of his law-suit, and his heirs, perceiving that simple agriculturists like them could do little or nothing

against so great a man as a senator of Abdera, allowed their advocate to bring the matter to a compromise, by which it was agreed that they should pay the costs of the action, and abstain from completing the proposed barn, the rather as they had no money left to finish it, and the law-suit had so eaten up their estate that there was no longer any necessity for a barn upon it at all.

Now it must have been pretty clear that neither of these actions could throw any light upon the present, inasmuch as in neither of them had any legal decision been arrived at: both, by good luck, had been ended by a compromise. But the senator who produced them seemed desirous of turning them to no other account than merely to prove to the senate that in neither case—though both, by reason of the importance of the matter in dispute, and of the subtlety of the arguments employed, bore a great resemblance to that concerning the ass's shadow—had any attempt been made to appeal to the great council, all the parties, as well clients as advocates, being fully persuaded that the ordinary courts had power and authority to deal with such cases.

The assembled Asses supported this view with the more zeal in that they were decidedly a majority if the suit were to be decided by the ordinary courts; but on this very account the Shadows only persisted the more resolutely in their opposition.

The whole morning was consumed in quarrelling and shouting, and the gentlemen would have separated, at dinner-time without really having transacted any business, when a great number of Shadows, who, under the management of the guildmaster Awl, had assembled before the council-house, and reinforced themselves by a crowd of the lowest classes, at last brought the matter to a conclusion. The party of the arch-priest subsequently laid to the charge of the guildmaster that he had quietly stepped on to the balcony, and by well-understood signs excited the people to an uproar. Their opponents, however, stoutly denied the imputation, and asserted that the intolerable noise and confusion created by the Asses had given the assembled citizens a notion that some violence was being done to the members of their party, and this mistake had occasioned the whole disturbance.

However this may be, certain it is that a piercing yell suddenly assailed the windows of

the council-chamber : — “ Liberty ! liberty ! Guildmaster Awl for ever ! Down with the donkey ! down with the Jasonians ! ” •

The archon came to the window, and begged the crowd to be quiet. But the tumult rather increased than diminished, and some of the boldest among the rioters declared that they would burn down the senate-house, unless the gentlemen would disperse at once, and leave the whole matter to be decided by the people in their great council. Some bad characters (and a few fishwomen were among them) broke into one or two of the neighbouring houses, snatched lighted brands from the hearth, and ran back with them in their hands to show honourable gentlemen that their threats were meant quite in earnest.

In the mean time the concourse that was thus occasioned brought up also a number of Asses, who came to help their friends with pokers, tongs, shovels, cleavers, dung-forks, and anything else that came to hand ; and though they were greatly outnumbered by the Shadows, yet, by means of their vivacity, the contempt in which they held their opponents, and the cuffs and thrusts by which they enforced their verbal insults, they soon made broken heads

rather common casualties ; and the riot became universal.

In such a state of affairs as this, it was clear enough that only one course was open to those assembled in the senate-house, and that was, for the sake of peace and out of a desire for the common good, to leave the suit of the ass and his shadow to be decided by the great council of the State, only providing that this should be done without prejudice, and should on no account be drawn into a precedent.

Meantime honourable gentlemen felt so uneasy in their seats, that as soon as they had—though, it must be confessed, in a very tumultuous way—arrived at this conclusion, they begged with outstretched hands of Mr. Guildmaster Awl just to step down and quiet the people. The guildmaster was pleased enough to see the patricians so completely in the power of the populace, and quite willing to exhibit both his good-will towards one party and his authority with the other ; but the tumult was now so great that his voice, though one of the most stentorian in Abdera, could be heard as little as the cry of a ship-boy at the mast-head in the midst of the most furious tempest. Indeed, the wrath of the mob had become so hot that

his own life would not have been quite secure—
X especially as, in their rage, they did not rightly
distinguish who it was—when, most happily for
all parties, just at that moment the arch-priest
Agathysus, who thought this the most opportune
moment to make a demonstration, came by with
his golden fleece on a pole, and all his priesthood
about him. He found means to calm the up-
roar, and gave the excited multitude the assu-
rance that they should have satisfaction, and
that he would himself be the first person to
propose bringing the matter before the great
council.

This open assurance of the arch-priest, together
with his coolness and courtesy, and perhaps also
the reverence with which the Abderite people
were accustomed to regard the golden fleece, had
so good an effect that in a few minutes the
whole crowd was quiet, and the market-place
resounded with shouts of "Agathysus the arch-
priest for ever!" The wounded slipped off home
to bind up their broken heads, and the rest of
the assembly streamed away after the arch-
priest. The guildmaster had thus the mortifi-
cation of seeing a great part of his devoted
Shadows, separated from the rest of their body
help to swell the triumph of his enemy.

In that moment of intoxication it would have been no hard matter to induce them to pour out all those vials of wrath which they had prepared for their presumed enemies, the Asses, on the devoted heads of their chosen friends the Shadows.

CHAPTER IX.

Politics of both parties.—The arch priest follows up his advantages.—The "Shadows" recede.—The day of decision is appointed.

THE unexpected advantage which the arch-priest had gained over the "Shadows" damaged that party all the more effectually, as it not only deprived them of the joy and glory of the victory which they had already gained in the senate, but yet further weakened them by showing how light was the hold which they had on the popular mind. It was a proof of the fickleness of the multitude, who very seldom know what it is they really want.

Agathyrus, now the avowed head of the Asses, had by his emissaries discovered that nothing had so far promoted the cause of his opponents among the common people as the opposition which he and his friends had made

in the beginning to permitting the appeal to be made to the great council.

Now, as this council consisted of four hundred men, who were regarded as the representatives of the whole body of Abderite citizens, and as at least half of them consisted of small tradesmen and artisans, each person eligible to a place in the council considered himself personally injured by the supposed intention of limiting the prerogative of the council; and thus the dexterous pretence of Mr. Guildmaster Awl, that the whole was a deeply-laid scheme for overturning the democracy, found the more ready belief.

In fact, all that was really democratic in the Abderite constitution was little more than a theory, for the lesser council (two-thirds of which consisted of the highest classes) did for the most part whatever it chose, and the occasions on which alone the great council could be assembled were so limited by the fundamental laws of the State, that it almost always lay with the smaller council to determine whether the four hundred were to be called together or not: indeed, they were usually assembled only for the purpose of ratifying what the other council had already decided. But on the very account

that this right of the Abderite commons was of so little political importance, they were all the more zealous in asserting and defending it, and it was of the greater consequence to conceal from the people the wheels which governed their motions, as they firmly believed that they moved spontaneously. Now it was really a master-stroke on the part of Agathyrus, that he, exactly at the moment when their decision must be most valuable, induced the people to decide in favour of his party, by appearing to give them what they most valued; and as, instead of risking anything by the step, he had only introduced dissensions into the camp of his adversaries, they, on the contrary, were now obliged to seek out new means to oust the arch-priest and his adherents from their newly-acquired vantage-ground, and to extinguish the favour which they had gained with the democracy.

The heads of the Shadows assembled one evening at the house of the Lady Salabanda, and determined that instead of urging the archon to fix an early day for the gathering of the four hundred, they should rather, if the assembly must be held at all, delay it as long as possible, in order to give the people time to cool. In the mean time they lost no opportunity

of impressing on the people how foolish it was to attribute to good-will and democratic feeling on the part of the arch-priest a step which simply arose out of their weakness—for if the Asses had had it in their power to prevent the suit being carried before the great council, they certainly would have done it, and troubled themselves very little whether the people liked it or not;—that this sudden departure from their former policy was too gross an attempt to scatter disunion among the party of the people, to impose upon men of common sense. On the contrary, true patriots ought to be more on their guard, now they saw how easily the *demos* was influenced by a few sweet words, lest such means should be made instrumental to the destruction of the popular liberties.

The high-priest Strobilus, who was present at this and similar meetings, did all that man could do to diminish the influence of his rival among the people, and to put his intentions in an odious point of view. “Only,” said he, “I am rather in doubt whether we shall get from these measures all the results we wish. I am preparing for him another and a sharper chastisement, which will have all the more effectual working, inasmuch as it will fall quite unexpectedly upon

his head. The time has not yet come for me to explain myself more clearly : leave the matter in my hands. Let him flatter himself yet a little longer with the hope to drag the priest Strobylus after him in his triumphal procession. His joy shall be abundantly embittered to him, be quite well assured of that. In the mean time, if we are honourable to one another, as I trust we are, and thoroughly in earnest to obtain a victory over our enemies, we must keep close tongues over what I have just hinted about my intentions, and wait the time for discovery. Agathysus must be allowed to rest in fancied security ; he must imagine that we have only one string to our bow, and that our only trust lies in the majority which we hope to obtain in the great council."

Everybody agreed that the high-priest had hit the right nail on the head, and the meeting separated, very curious to know what the punishment was which the priest had *in petto* for his antagonist, but at the same time quite convinced that if it contemplated the entire ruin of the latter, it could not be in more zealous hands than those of Strobylus.

While these intrigues were carried on, Agathysus did not fail on his part to improve the

advantages which his presence of mind at so critical a period had given him. He had taken care to regale the crowd who followed him to the archi-sacerdotal palace with bread and wine, and earnestly exhorted them to peace and quietness, before he dismissed them to their homes. They followed his advice, and entertained all their neighbours with praises of their princely host, the graces of his person, and the courtesy of his manner. But though he knew the republic too well to despise these tokens of popular favour, he knew also that he had not yet gained much by them. The one thing needful was to secure a majority among the four hundred, partly because these would have to decide the matter in hand, partly because, these being secured, he could make much more parade with them than with the rest of the people. He had already a considerable party among them; but, besides a great number of declared and zealous Shadows, with whom he dared not meddle, there were in the ranks of the four hundred not a few, and those precisely the most respectable of the whole body, who had either not declared themselves at all, or who seemed a little inclined to the party of the Shadows, because the heads of the opposite faction appeared to

them as ambitious, self-seeking persons,—men, in short, who had fostered this ridiculous strife between Asses and Shadows only to set the commonwealth in commotion, and in the midst of the tumult to secure their own private ends. To bring these people to his side now appeared as easy to him as it would undoubtedly be decisive of the triumph of his party. He invited them all from time to time to dinner. Most of them accepted, and the arch-priest, who had a particular gift to cover all his policy with an appearance of great openness and straightforwardness, made no secret that he had invited them with a view of neutralizing, with the aid of such honourable and intelligent men, the prejudices which a portion of the citizens had excited against him. That, in a dispute between an ass-driver and a dentist, and one too in which the matter in question was merely the shadow of an ass, a man of his position should seek to be made the head of a party, was really too ridiculous for belief. At the same time the poor Anthrax was a dependant of Jason's, and he could not refuse to take the man under his protection just so far as justice required. Had it not been for the untimely and unwarrantable heat of the guild-master Awl, who had constituted himself the

patron of the dentist—not because the man was in the right, but because he was a member of the cordwainers' guild—so insignificant a cause would never have reached so high a degree of importance. But as soon as a fire is kindled there are always found people to keep it up with fuel and bellows. He for his part had made it a rule never to meddle with things that did not concern him; and he hoped the step he had taken to quiet the uproar excited by the adherents of the guildmaster Awl, would not be regarded by reasonable men as an unjustifiable interference, but simply as the act of a good citizen desirous to have order kept in the commonwealth, the more so as such a proceeding was far more suitable to the priestly character than to throw oil on the fire, as had been done by some whom it was needless for him to name. As to the rest he did not deny that since the affair had not been settled in the first instance, but had grown to such a magnitude that all Abdera took an interest in it, he wished now that it should be brought before the great council, and the sooner the better. He desired this not only because poor Anthrax would then get that justice which was so necessary to him, and which there could be no doubt would be willingly

awarded to him by so high and honourable a court, but because some bounds might at the same time be set to the hitherto unrestrained self-will of the sycophants, and this description of law-suit, which did so little credit to Abdera, be as far as possible prevented in future.

Agathyrus said all this with so much self-possession, and almost indifference, that his guests could scarcely wonder enough at the unrighteousness of those who wanted to make out so right-minded a gentleman to be one of the chief promoters of the disturbance. They considered themselves now fully convinced of the contrary, and he succeeded, in a few hours, in turning these cautious people, without their being at all aware of the fact, into as good and genuine Asses as any in Abdera—and they all the while believed themselves to be altogether impartial! Perhaps the excellent wine which he set before them might have had something to do with the transformation, by extinguishing every shadow of mistrust, and opening every mind to the impressions which their host desired to make.

It may easily be imagined that this proceeding of Agathyrus added much to the uneasiness of

the other party. The revolution which had thus taken place in that portion of the citizens which had been hitherto indifferent, became day by day more evident. It was equally plain, too, that the batteries which the redoubled zeal and jealousy of the Shadows directed against their opponents, not only did not help their cause, but produced quite the contrary effect, by bringing out into strong contrast the rage and ill-temper of the Shadows with the calm dignity and patriotic language of the prelate and his party. The Shadows would now have been puzzled what to do in order to keep up the spirits of their almost despairing partisans, if the priest Strobylus had not encouraged them by the assurance that as soon as the day of decision was fixed he would raise such a storm about the ears of the little Jason (as he was accustomed to call the arch-priest) as he could by no amount of cunning foresee, and which would not fail entirely to change the aspect of affairs.

The Shadows seemed now to keep so quiet that Agathysus and his friends could only attribute their depression to the effect of that twofold advantage which he had obtained over them. They redoubled, therefore, their prayers

to the archon Onolaus (whose son was one of the most intimate friends of the arch-priest, and the most determined Ass in Abdera) to fix as early a day as possible to bring the matter before the great council, and by their continual urgency they at last succeeded in getting the day fixed for the sixth after the last session of the ordinary council. Those who are accustomed to judge of the wisdom of any plan, or the expediency of any policy, from its results, will probably condemn the arch-priest, as wanting in prudence in allowing himself to be lulled into security by the sudden inactivity of his opponents; and we cannot altogether acquit him of this error. We do not deny that it would have been more politic of him had he attributed this sudden inactivity to some deep-laid design over which they were brooding in silence, rather than to the indifference of despair; but it was always one of the faults of this distinguished man to have not only a very vivid conviction of his own strength, but also, arising out of this, a too great contempt for the power and tactics of his enemies. He never thought it worth his while to reckon what mischief his adversaries could do him, because he was fully convinced the means would never fail him to ward off the

most dangerous of their assaults. At the same time it must be allowed that hundreds of other men placed in similar circumstances would have acted and thought precisely as he did, and turned the good-will of these new friends to good account before their zeal had time to cool down and the enemy to recover their lost ground.

That the result of these proceedings was not exactly such as might have been expected, arose from a stroke of policy on the part of the priest Strobilus, one which no wisdom of Agathyrus could enable him to foresee. However well acquainted he might be with the character of the man, the stroke in question was of such a nature that actual experience alone would have convinced him that Strobilus was capable of it.

CHAPTER X.

What sort of a mine the priest Strobilus sprang for the destruction of his rival.—Assembling of the Decemviri. —The arch-priest is summoned to appear before them, but contrives to extricate himself without damage, and to turn the circumstance to his advantage.

THE day before the suit which had so disturbed the tranquillity of Abdera for some weeks past was to be finally decided by the great council, the priest Strobilus, very early in the morning, came attended by two of the clergy of Latona's temple and several other persons of consideration, to wait on the archon. The whole party was in a state of great perturbation and excitement, and their object was to obtain the attention of the chief magistrate to a portent which, as they had reason to fear, boded nothing less than absolute ruin to the republic.

For two nights running some of the persons

engaged in the temple service had believed that they heard the frogs of the holy pool, instead of their usual chorus of Brek-kek-kek-koax-koax—which chorus they shared not only with all other natural frogs here on earth, but, if we may believe Aristophanes, with those also in the Stygian marshes—had uttered very unusual and lamentable tones, although the aforesaid persons had been too frightened to go near enough to distinguish clearly what those sounds were.

As soon as this portent was mentioned to Strobilus, which had only been done on the preceding evening, the matter seemed to him so serious that he resolved to spend the whole night with his subordinate priests by the side of the sacred pool. Until about midnight the deepest silence prevailed, but at that time a mournful wailing burst forth from the pool, and as they approached more closely they could clearly distinguish the words, "Woe! woe! alas! alas!" These lamentations endured for about the space of an hour, and were heard not only by the priests, but by all those who had been brought to witness so frightful and hitherto unheard-of a prodigy.

Now there could be no doubt that, by this terrific and threatening miracle, Latona in-

tended either to warn the citizens of her beloved Abdera of some great mischief hanging over their heads, or to excite them to the punishment of some as yet undiscovered crime, which might otherwise bring down the wrath of the gods upon their devoted city.

This being his own view of the case, it became his duty, in virtue of his office, and in the name of Latona, to entreat his excellency at once to call together the college of the Decemviri, that this portent might be considered with the attention which its importance demanded, and such other steps taken as the immediate danger might be judged to require.

The archon, who had the reputation of inclining a little towards the free-thinking notions of Democritus about the holy frogs, shook his head at this narration, and it was some minutes before he gave the priests any answer at all. But the earnestness with which these gentlemen pressed the subject on his attention, and the evident impression which had been made on the other witnesses of the alleged miracle, convinced him that, before many hours were over, all Abdera would be full of this new wonder, and probably seized with such terror and consternation as would render indifference on his part quite out

of the question. Nothing was left to him but at once, and in the presence of the priests, to give the order required, and to summon the Decemviri to meet in one hour's time in the temple of Latona, to consult on the extraordinary prodigy which had just occurred.

In the mean time the report of a fearful miracle which had been observed for three nights running in the grove of Latona, had, by the care of the chief priest, circulated throughout the city.

The friends of Agathyrus were not so simple as to be taken in by all this trickery, and they felt, with as much bitterness as indignation, that under the whole lay a plot against their patron and their party. Many of the younger gentlemen and ladies of the city affected to jest about the new wonder, and made up nightly parties to hear the elegiac music of Latona's frogs. But on the common people, and on a great many of their betters too, who in things of this nature are often found very like the vulgar, the narration of the priest did not fail to have its full effect. The "woe! woe! alas! alas!" of the holy reptiles interrupted all private and public business. Old and young, women and children, gathered together in the streets, and inquired, with pale and anxious countenances, into the



particulars of the portent. Everybody was naturally desirous of having the history from the lips of the first witnesses, and as the impression which the narrator sees made on his hearers excites almost always a desire to add whatever may make the story more interesting, so in this case the whole marvel was in the course of an hour or two enriched with such astounding additions, that the hair of the listeners stood on end with affright. Some asserted that the frogs, when they commenced their fatal song, had put forth out of the pool human heads; others, that they had great fiery eyes as big as walnuts; others again, that ghastly spectres had been seen at the same time floating round the grove, and uttering fearful howlings, while there were not wanting some who declared that though the heavens were perfectly clear and calm elsewhere, yet over the holy pool it had thundered and lightened; and, finally, a few avowed that in the melancholy song of the frogs they had clearly distinguished the words, "Woe to thee, O Abdera!" In short, the wonder, like all wonders, went on ever increasing; and the more unreasonable, the more monstrous and incredible, the things asserted, the more ready belief they found in the minds of the multitude.

And now the college of the Decenviri were assembled in the temple of Latona, and no doubt was felt among the people, when they gazed on the perplexed and melancholy countenances of those venerable men, hastening to the sacred grove, that in the cup of Abderitan destiny ingredients of extraordinary importance were being mingled; and they awaited the result in trembling expectation.

This sacred body, which was considered the most venerable in Abdera, consisted of the archon, the four eldest senators, the two senior guildmasters, the high-priest of Latona, and the two overseers of the holy grove. All matters which concerned the religion of the State were considered to be under its cognizance, and the respect in which it was held was almost unbounded.

It is an old observation, that wise men grow usually wiser as they grow older, and fools more foolish. A Nestor among the Abderites would seldom be found to have gained much, by living through three generations, and it might be predicted, with tolerable safety, that the Decenviri of Abdera were, taken on an average, the possessors of the emptiest heads in all the republic. The good people were so willing to receive the

narration of the high-priest as a fact against the reality of which there could by no possibility be any objection to make, that they considered the hearing of evidence just as a piece of formality, and nothing more—a thing which had to be got over, and could not be done too quickly.

As Strobilus found these respectable men fully convinced of the accuracy of his statements, he considered that he should now risk little if he proceeded at once to that stroke of policy on account of which he had invented the whole fable.

“From the first moment,” said he, “that with my own eyes I became a witness to this astonishing miracle, which, I may say without hesitation, is altogether without a parallel in the annals of Abdera, the conviction has forced itself on my mind that it must be a warning from the goddess that her wrath had been excited by some yet undiscovered crime, and was hanging over our heads. For this cause I felt myself bound at once to petition his excellency the archon to summon a meeting of this most venerable college. What was in my mind *then* a mere suspicion, has since been converted into a certainty: the criminal has been discovered, and the crime can be substan-

tiated by eye-witnesses, whose veracity will the less be called in question as the offender is a person of such great power and consideration that nothing but a fear of the gods could induce persons of low position in society to bear evidence against him at all. Most reverend gentlemen, would you, let me ask, have considered it possible that any one among us could be daring enough to treat with contumely what has been handed down to us from the very founders of our city as deserving of all respect and reverence, to bring into contempt our religious worship, and to profane, without consideration either for the laws or the common belief of our State, what we deem most sacred? In a word, could you believe that there lived a man in Abdera who, in spite of the very letter of the law, kept storks in his garden, and fed them daily with frogs out of the pool of Latona?"

Astonishment and fright displayed themselves on the countenances of all present but one. At last the archon, in order not to be the only exception, thought it necessary to look as frightened as his colleagues really were. Is it possible?" cried two or three of the oldest at once, "and who can the wretch be who is guilty of such a crime?"

"Pardon me," said Strobilus, "if I entreat you to soften that harsh expression. I for my part am quite willing to believe that not impiety, but mere thoughtlessness, or what, since the time that Democritus has sown his seeds of unbelief among us, has been called philosophy, has been the origin of this offence. I will, and must, the more readily hold this opinion, inasmuch as the man against whom it can be proved by the united testimony of more than seven witnesses, is himself a sacred person—a sacred priest—in a word, it is the descendant of Jason—Agathysus himself!"

"Agathysus!" cried the astonished Decemviri with one voice. Three or four turned pale, and seemed utterly perplexed to find a man with whom and with whose connections they had always stood on the best terms, mixed up in such a matter.

Strobilus gave them no time to recover themselves, but proceeded at once to call in his witnesses. They were heard one after another, and it was elicited that Agathysus had, at all events for some time past, kept two storks in his garden, that they had often been seen hovering over the holy pool, and that one at least of its croaking inhabitants, while sunning himself on

the bank, had been seen to become the prey of the stork.

Now, though the veracity of the witnesses seemed to be beyond all doubt, yet the archon Onolaus observed that with such a man as the arch-priest of Jason it would be well, for fear of unpleasant consequences, to go softly to work, and to intimate to him in a friendly way, on the part of the Decemviri, that they were satisfied that the thing complained of had taken place without his knowledge, and that he should be requested without opposition to give up to the Decemviri the storks which had invaded the precincts of the holy pool, and thus give an unmistakable proof of his good-will towards the customs and laws of their ancestors.

Three voices out of the nine supported the proposition of the archon, but the priest Strobilus and the remaining five set their faces with the greatest zeal against it. They asserted that while it was not for a moment to be tolerated that a citizen of Abdera, if found guilty of so serious an offence, should be treated with such misplaced lenity, still the cause of justice required that no man should be condemned without a hearing. The high-priest added that Agathysrus ought to be cited to appear before the Decemviri and answer the accusation brought

against him. The resolution passed by six voices against four, and the arch-priest was summoned with all the customary formalities.

Agathysus was not unprepared when the messengers of the Decemviri appeared at his house. After keeping them at least an hour waiting, he at last received them in his hall of audience, seated on an ivory chair, in his priestly robes, and surrounded by his clergy.

In this state he calmly awaited the address of the stammering spokesman. As soon as the message was delivered, he made a sign to a servant who stood at a respectful distance behind his chair, and said, "Take these gentlemen into the garden, and show them the storks that they have been talking about, that they may tell their principals that they have seen them with their own eyes; and then bring them back again here." Ordered off in this way, the deputation stared; but reverence for the arch-priest tied their tongues, and they followed the lacquey, silent with wonder, and with the air of men who did not rightly know what they were about.

When they returned Agathysus asked them whether they had seen the storks, and as they all answered "Yes," he added, "Now go and take my compliments to the most worshipful

body of the Decemviri who have sent you, and tell them that these storks, as well as everything else within the compass of this temple, are under the protection of Jason, and, further, that to cite an arch-priest of this temple, and to judge him according to Abderite law, I consider a very ridiculous assumption of authority ;” and with these words he signed to them that they might withdraw.

This reply, for which the Decemviri ought to have been better prepared, as it was perfectly known to them that the temple of Jason and its precincts, as well as its priesthood and all connected with it, were exempt from the jurisdiction of the republic, did nevertheless throw them into a very unenviable state of perplexity. The high-priest Strobilus fell thereat into such a furious passion that he knew not what he said. He concluded a most intemperate oration by threatening the whole republic with destruction, unless the most complete satisfaction were given to Latona, and avowed that he did not see how this could be done save by humbling the overweening pride of an inflated peacock who, as he declared, ought not to be regarded as a priest at all.

The archon, and the three of the Decemviri

who agreed with him, remarked, in reply, that Latona, for whom and for whose frogs they entertained the greatest possible reverence, would derive no satisfaction from the Decemviri overstepping the boundaries of their jurisdiction. "I said as much as this to you before, but you would not listen. If my proposal had been accepted, I am quite certain that the arch-priest would have sent us a reasonable and courteous reply, for a good word always finds a good reception. But the worthy high-priest thought he had found an opportunity to indulge his old grudge against Agathysus, and now we see that he and his zealous adherents have brought a slur upon the dignity of the magistrature which it would take all the water of the Hebrus and the Nestus a century to wash away. I confess," said the archon, with a warmth which had not been observed in him for many years past, "I am weary of being at the head of a State which allows itself to be overturned by frogs and asses' shadows, and I have a great mind to lay down my office before I am a day older; but so long as I do hold it I will hold you responsible, Mr. High-priest, for whatever disorders from this moment forward take place in the streets of Abdera." And with these

words, which he accompanied with a very determined look on the astounded Strobilus, the archon rose, and, followed by his three adherents, left the rest of their colleagues in the most unmitigated astonishment.

“What is to be done now, gentlemen?” at last said the high-priest, who, seeing the new turn that affairs were taking, began to be not a little uneasy; “what is to be done now?”

“That is exactly what we do not know,” replied the senior guildmaster and two of the senior senators, and took their departure forthwith, so that Strobilus remained alone with the two conservators of the holy pools and goddess. For some time they all three spoke at once without troubling themselves about the statements or arguments of each other, and then concluded by a unanimous resolution to repair to the house of one of the conservators, and there to—dine. After this they would take further counsel with their partisans as to what steps should be taken, so as, by means of the commotion which was still raging in the city, to secure the victory to their own side.

CHAPTER XI.

Agathysus calls his adherents together.—Substance of his address to them.—He invites them to a grand sacrificial feast.—The archon Onolaus determines to resign his office.—Uneasiness of the arch-priest's party at this determination.—By what stratagem they frustrate his purpose.

IN the mean time Agathysus delayed not, as soon as the delegates of the Decemviri had left him, to call together his adherents both in the council and among the citizens, and besides them all the Jasonians. He related to them what had happened to him through the intrigues of the priest Strobilus with the Decemviri, and pointed out to them how necessary it was, not only for the success of their party, but also for the honour and even the safety of Abdera, to frustrate the designs of this rancorous person. The people, through the ridiculous fable of the frogs and their lamentations, were now in com-

motion; they required to be calmed, and to have an impulse given to them in another direction. It must be evident that Strobilus had only invented this miserable legend to trump up an accusation, contemptible in itself, but formidable on account of the superstitions of the people, against him—the arch-priest—before the Decemviri, and to make out of it an affair weighty enough to interest the whole republic; but that, after all, this was only one of those means which in his despair he had embraced to raise up again his sunken party, and, through the commotions excited thereby in the State, to give new hopes to the Shadows.

From all this it required no prophet's eye to foresee that out of the materials which had been furnished by that morning's work the restless priest would organize new intrigues to make him (Agathysus) still more unpopular, and, if needful, to excite a second and still more dangerous uproar. On these accounts he had judged it prudent to assemble his trusty friends—friends also of the commonwealth—in order to lay before them the state of the case, and to enable them to indoctrinate the common people, and all who were in a similar condition, with correct ideas as to the

circumstances which had recently transpired, and their inevitable consequences. As for the storks, they had come without any instrumentality of his, and had built themselves a nest in a tree in his garden. He had not thought it right to disturb them, partly because storks, among all civilized nations, were looked upon as having a kind of right to hospitality, and partly because the privileges of the temple of Jason include an inviolable asylum to every living thing within its precincts. The law by which the Decemviri had lately forbidden the keeping of storks within the State of Abdera, did not concern them at all, and indeed, strictly speaking, the jurisdiction of the council itself only extended to what concerned the worship of Latona and its accessories. It ought, too, especially to be remembered that the temple of Jason was only so far connected with the republic as that, by the constitution itself, this latter was bound to protect it against all violence from foreign or domestic enemies; but from all legal proceedings on the part of the Abderites, and from all subjection to the authority of the State, it was entirely and for ever free. He had therefore done no more than the privileges of his own station demanded when he had sent away the

deputation of the Decemviri. That court, on the other hand, by the illegal steps which at the suggestion of Strobilus they had taken, had put him in a condition to require, in the name of Jason and all the Jasonians, full satisfaction from the republic for the insult offered to his arch-priestly dignity. The matter would probably have more serious consequences than the partisans of Mr. Guildmaster Awl, and Strobilus with his frog-worshippers, anticipated. The golden fleece, which the Jasonians preserved in their temple as their richest treasure, had been for centuries regarded as the palladium of Abdera, and honoured accordingly. The Abderites also would take care neither to do, nor to permit any act by which they might be deprived of the protection afforded by such a relic, in which, according to old and universal belief, the welfare and indeed the destiny of their republic were involved.

The arch-priest received, on these observations, the strongest assurances from all present of their zeal for the common welfare as well as for the privileges of Jason's temple. Some desultory conversation took place on the measures to be adopted in order to confirm the people in their good feelings, and to win back those who had

been led astray by the miracle alleged to have recently taken place, or by the complaints of Strobilus about the storks of the arch-priest. The assembly then separated, and every one betook himself to his own affairs, Agathysus not forgetting to invite them all to a solemn sacrificial festival which he was about that same evening to celebrate in the temple of Jason.

While these things were going on in the temple of the arch-priest, the archon, in the highest degree dissatisfied with the not very honourable part which against his will he had been made to play, had returned to his own house, and had called together all his relations, sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, cousins, brothers and sisters, and stated to them his irrevocable determination on the following day to lay down his office, as soon as the senate assembled, and to retire to an estate which some years before he had purchased on the island of Thasos. His eldest son and some other members of the family were not present at this meeting, having been sent for half an hour previously to the palace of the arch-priest. As the rest saw that, notwithstanding all their instances, Onolaus held firm to his determination, one of the party slipped privately away

and warned those assembled with Agathyrus, urging them to do all in their power against so undesirable a resolution.

He arrived just at the moment when the assembly was breaking up. Those who had long known the archon's way of thinking considered the subject much more serious than it appeared at first to the rest. "For ten years," said they, "this is probably the first time that the archon has decided anything of himself. Certainly it is not a hastily-formed conclusion; he must have been long brooding over it in his own mind, and what we hear to-day is only an announcement which at no distant time must have been made to us. One thing is clear, that, as this intended resignation is his own doing, it will not be very easy to get it out of his mind again."

The whole assembly fell into perplexity; they felt that at so critical a period as the present the proceeding could not be other than prejudicial, not only to their faction, but also to the republic itself. It was unanimously resolved that so much of the archon's intention should be made known to the people as would cause fear and uncertainty to affect their minds, and that the most considerable persons of each party should,

before the sacrifice in Jason's temple, wait on the archon, and conjure him, in the name of all Abdera, not to leave the helm of State in the midst of a tempest in which the care of so wise a pilot was especially required. The proposal to unite the heads of both parties in this deputation was the more needful, because it was evident that unless this were done the whole project would fall to the ground; for though Onolaus had from his youth up been a firm adherent of the aristocratic party, he had made it a rule never to be treated as such. The popular manners, which to this end he had long affected, became at last so natural to him as to win him more good-will among the people than any of his predecessors had ever enjoyed, especially since the city had been divided into the two parties of Asses and Shadows, for he made it a point of honour so to behave himself that neither of the two could claim him as their own. Indeed, though nearly all his relations and friends were avowed "*Asses*," yet the Shadows remained in the conviction that they lost, and their adversaries won, nothing by the circumstance. Indeed, the Asses were obliged to hide all their policy from him, lest, as was not impossible, he might think it his duty to

give some advantage to the other side, so as to restore equilibrium, when they had gained any on their own.

The publication of the archon's resolution had all the effect which was expected. The people fell into a new perplexity, and most of them said that nothing more was necessary to accomplish the threat contained in the lamentation of the frogs. If the archon forsook the republic in those difficult circumstances in which it now stood, all was over.

The priest Strobilus and the guildmaster Awl had intelligence of the great feast which Agathysus was preparing, and of the archon's resolution at the same time. They saw at once consequences of this twofold blow, and hastened, if possible, to neutralize the one and prevent the other. Strobilus on his part invited the people to a solemn expiation, which was to be performed with great ceremony that same evening in the temple of Latona, to purify the State from the common transgression, and to avert the evil prognostication of the lament uttered by the frogs. The guildmaster visited all the chief councillors, guildmasters, and other principal citizens of his party, and advised with them how they should act so as to change the resolu-

tion of the archon. Most of them were already prepared by the tools of the opposite party to believe that it was purely by the intrigues of the Asses that Onolaus had been induced to determine on resigning, and it was very well known, they said, that the Asses had spared no trouble to confirm him in his resolution. The Shadows were satisfied that their opponents, by this means, expected to raise themselves at once to the greatest consequence in the State, and had already secured a majority in the great council, with which the choice lay.

These considerations occasioned them so much alarm, that, with an immense crowd following them, they hastened away to the dwelling of the archon, and, while the populace raised one cheer after another, most suppliantly besought his excellency to recall his unhappy intention of retiring from office, and never to forsake the people, least of all at a time when his wisdom was indispensable to the tranquillity of the State. The archon showed himself much gratified by this manifest proof of the love and esteem in which he was held by his worthy fellow-citizens. He did not conceal from them that about a quarter of an hour before the greater part of the senate, the Jasonians, and nearly all the

principal families of the city, had waited upon him to prefer the same request in the warmest and most pressing manner; that, whatever reasons he had to be weary of the cares of government, and to wish them devolved on stronger shoulders, yet that he had not the heart to resist so vivid an expression of confidence on the part of all conditions in the State; —he looked on this unanimous feeling in his favour as a good omen for the speedy restoration of the common tranquillity, and he would for his part do all that in him lay to promote so desirable an object.

As soon as the archon had concluded this well-meant address, the Shadows stared at one another with astonishment, and found themselves, to their unspeakable dissatisfaction, wiser by half at least than they were before, for they now saw that they had been deceived by the Asses, and led to place themselves in a false position. They had hoped to gain the archon wholly to their side by the step they had taken, and now found that not only had their opponents proceeded in the same manner, but had even been beforehand with them. Nor was this the most vexatious part of the business. The underhanded conduct of the Asses was an

evident proof how fully convinced they were that the archon was not unfavourable to their cause. They for their own part had nothing to gain by continuing Onolaus in office, for he had never done the least thing for them. The only reason they had for desiring it was, that they believed that the Shadows would have the greatest influence in electing his successor.

These thoughts flashed on them all at once, and were so amazing that it was with the greatest possible difficulty the poor Shadows could conceal their disappointment, and disperse themselves without his wondering at their haste or noticing the change in their countenances. This day was a great day for the wise and somewhat corpulent Onolaus, and he was now perfectly contented with Abdera. He commanded "not at home" to all visitors, chatted away with the ladies of his family, ate till night, went early to bed, and slept, undisturbed by any cares for the fate of the republic, till far on into the bright morning of the following day.

CHAPTER XII.

The day of decision.—Measures taken by both parties.—

The four hundred assemble, and the proceedings commence.—Philanthropic and patriotic dream of the editor of this remarkable history.

THE various machinations which up to this day had been brought into play on both sides had produced their natural effect. The conflict of opinions had brought the public to a kind of fluctuating level, so that when the four hundred assembled they found everything in the same state as nearly as possible as it had been a few days before—that is, that the Asses composed the greater part of the senate, the patricians, and the most considerable and respectable of the citizens, but that the actual numerical majority was on the part of the Shadows. For since the solemn procession to the frog-pools of Latona, which Strobilus had arranged the evening before, and which the people, with the nomophylax Gryllus and the guildmaster Awl at their

head, had very devoutly attended, the *demos* had fully declared itself for the party of the Shadows. It would have been a very easy matter for the priest Strobilus, had he been so minded, to have taken the opportunity afforded by this procession, and to have caused a revolution in Abdera. He had great influence with the fanatical rabble, and they on their part had more to gain than to lose by a commotion ; but besides that he had been expressly charged, in the name of the archon, to keep the masses in order, and to that end to see that the temple and all its approaches were closed by nightfall, the heads of the party were by no means inclined, without the greatest necessity, to do what would deliver up the city to slaughter and pillage. They were wise enough to see, Abderites as they were, that, if once the populace got the reins out of their hands, it would never again be in their power to restrain the blind fury of the many-headed monster.

The guildmaster contented himself, when the procession was over, and the gates of the temple again closed, with saying to the departing multitude that "he hoped all those true Abderites would be found by nine o'clock on the following morning in the forum, to watch over the interests of their fellow-citizen Struthion, and, as

far as in them lay, to help his rightful claims to a legal victory."

This invitation, notwithstanding the moderate and, in his own opinion, cautious terms in which it was couched, was, in fact, nothing more or less than an attempt on the part of the seditious guildmaster to coerce the court, by the immediate danger of a civil commotion, to deliver judgment according to his desire. But then this was the very thing which the Shadows were resolved to do, and as the other party were fully convinced of the fact, they omitted no precautions, and took measures so as to be prepared for the worst. As soon as the court was opened, Agathyrus defended the approaches to the temple of Jason with a band of tanners and butchers armed with sharp cleavers and good strong cudgels, and in the houses of the principal Asses such preparations were made as though the owners anticipated a siege. The Asses themselves appeared with daggers under their garments, and some of those among them who were given to strong expressions wore armour under their tunics, that they might with greater security oppose their patriotic bosoms to the attacks of the enemies of the good cause. And now the ninth hour had come. All Ab-

dera stood in trembling expectation of the issue of a trial so important and so extraordinary: nobody had taken a regular breakfast, though the whole city had been astir with the day.

The four hundred were assembled on the terrace of the temple of Apollo and Diana, the ordinary place of meeting for the great council under the open sky. This terrace overlooked the forum, and access was obtained to it by a broad flight of fourteen steps. Both the parties to the suit were already in their places with their friends, relations, witnesses, and lawyers, and the whole market-place was densely packed by the expectant multitude, whose inclinations were made known clearly enough by a tremendous shout whenever a senator or a guildmaster of the Shadow party made his appearance.

All were now waiting for the nomophylax, who, in every case where the great council was assembled on subjects which did not immediately concern the constitution of Abdera, was accustomed to preside over its deliberations.

The Asses had indeed used every endeavour to persuade the archon Onolaus to fill with his own portly person the presidential chair of ivory, raised three steps above all the surrounding seats; but though they had urged their re-

quest on the ground that a new law would have to be passed, and that he ought, according to the laws of the constitution, to take the chair, he replied that he would rather lay down his life than adjudicate in so ridiculous a matter as the shadow of an ass, and in the end they were obliged to respect his delicacy.

The nomophylax, who, as a great observer of etiquette, was always on such occasions accustomed to keep everybody waiting for him, had taken it into his head that so solemn an occasion ought to be celebrated by music of his own composition, and which he had prepared as a sort of overture to the proceedings. This, though an innovation, was well received, and had, contrary to the intention of the nomophylax, who meant to excite and stimulate his party thereby, a very soothing effect; for the Asses cracked not a few jokes about the music, which, from time to time, occasioned peals of the heartiest laughter.

One said, "This allegro sounds like a war-song."

"Yes," said another, "in a cock-fight."

"Upon my word," exclaimed a third, "this adagio has very much the air of a funeral march. I wonder whether it is intended to

accompany the dentist and his patrons to the grave?"

"The whole music," said a fourth, "is only fit to be composed by Shadows, and listened to by Asses."

Now, however poor these jokes may be as to wit, yet they were quite sufficient to bring so jovial and light-minded a people into their usual and normal state of mind, a half-conical, whimsical condition, which had taken away all the bitterness from that party-spirit with which they had been so carefully inoculated, and which probably contributed quite as much as anything else to the preservation of the State at this critical juncture.

At last appeared the nomophylax, attended by his body-guard of poor old invalided artisans, all armed with a peaceful kind of rusty swords and blunted halberds.

The appearance of these warriors bore a greater resemblance to the ridiculous figures dressed up as scarecrows to frighten away the birds from an orchard, than to guardians of the public order, whose duty it is to secure reverence to the proceedings of justice. Happy, thrice happy, the State which needs no more formidable defenders for its hearths and homes! The

appearance of this laughable militia, and the absurd and farcical manner in which they behaved themselves in their unwonted warlike trappings—in which, by the way, it had been no easy matter to invest them—gave a new stimulus to the fun of the spectators, so that the criers had a great deal of trouble to bring the crowd to a becoming silence, and to that respect which was due to the highest of their national tribunals.

The president opened the proceedings with a short speech; the crier besought anew silence, and the advocates on both sides were required to set forth orally their complaints and replies. By such as passed for great masters in their art, the opportunity of displaying their skill in so subtle a matter as an ass's shadow must have been regarded as a great privilege.

But when, in addition to this, it is borne in mind that the matter was one which the people had judged to be of so great importance that the republic was actually divided into two factions about it, it is easy to see what motives there were for exertion. Since Abdera had existed there had never been seen a law-suit so ridiculous in itself, yet so momentous through the way in which it had been treated. A syco-

phant could have no genius whatever for his vocation who did not distinguish himself on such an occasion.

So much the more is it to be lamented that the tooth of time, which has devoured so many other illustrious works of human genius, and will, alas! consume so many more, has not spared either of the famous speeches delivered on this occasion. At least it is to be apprehended;—but yet who knows whether some future Layard, or Davis, or Rawlinson, may not discover them written on imperishable marble or yet more imperishable brass, or some future Curzon rescue them from some dusty monastic library in the Greek islands? Should Thrace itself ever fall into the hands of a Christian prince, and that prince take it upon him to become a patron of the arts and sciences, to found academies and to establish societies, then Abdera may have the same happiness which has lately happened to Nineveh, and is now happening to Carthage, and may be thoroughly excavated and investigated. For then this present history of the Abderites, imperfect as it is, will give a clue to much which will be worthy of examination, and, translated into the language of that future and better Thrace, will become a text-

book for the learned in archæology. Then there may be some possibility of finding in the archives of this renowned city the very acts, the original documents of this celebrated cause, and with them both the speeches whose loss we are now deploring. It is at least pleasant to take our flight into the future in this manner on the wings of philanthropic and patriotic visions, and anticipate those blessings which our posterity will enjoy,—blessings which the ever-increasing perfection of art and science seems to make certain, bringing, as such progress cannot fail to do, an enlightenment poured out on the whole human race, a sublimity of thought, a refinement of taste, and a grandeur of moral sentiment.

In the mean time it must be our comfort, that out of the few remaining documents touching this law-suit, we are able to give at least an outline of both these celebrated orations. And as to their genuineness the reader whose intellectual organization possesses a nose, may satisfy himself on that point by the aroma of unmistakable Abderite air which they exhale. This is, after all, the best proof of the authenticity of any work of mortal genius, whether we apply the test to the poems of an Ossian or to the speeches of an Abderite fig-eater.

CHAPTER XIII.

Speech of the sycophant Physignathus.

THE sycophant Physignathus, who, as the advocate of the dentist Struthion, had the right of speaking first, was a man of moderate stature, strong and muscular in configuration, and endowed with the lungs of a Stentor. He valued himself highly on having been a pupil of the renowned Gorgias, and put forth claims to be one of the greatest orators of his time. But even in this respect, as in many others, he was a decided Abderite. His great merit lay in his mode of modulating his voice, so as to give his verbose addresses more vivacity; in his intervals of at least an octave and a half, from one to another of which his voice went skipping about like a chamois on the mountains; and in the manifold gestures and grimaces by which he seemed to endeavour to enlighten his hearers without the necessity of words at all.

In the mean time we must not deny him the

credit, in all the causes which he had hitherto conducted, of having shown ability to puzzle the judges, to make his opponents unpopular, and to give black the appearance of white; nor was he deficient in an effective kind of word-painting, all which the reader will be able to judge by his speech, without any information from us. Physignathus stood up with all the hardihood of an advocate who knows that he has Abderites for hearers, and began:—

“Most noble, honourable, and wise!—Mighty councillors of the republic! If ever there were a day on which the excellency of our constitution shone forth in its fullest glory, and on which I have felt most vividly what it is to be a citizen of the State of Abdera, it is on the present glorious occasion. Before this high and honourable tribunal, before the expectant multitude, before the concourse of respectable strangers whom the fame of so extraordinary a spectacle has gathered together in crowds, a cause is now brought for decision which, in a less free, less skilfully balanced State, such even as Thebes, Athens, or Sparta, would hardly have been considered important enough to occupy the attention even for a moment of the great fathers of the commonwealth. Noble, praiseworthy, thrice-

fortunate Abdera ! Thou alone enjoyest a legislation which regards as sacred the smallest and most doubtful rights of thy citizens. Thou alone enjoyest a state of freedom and security of which other republics, whatever advantages they may possess, have only the shadow.

“ Tell me, in what other State would a suit between a common citizen and one of the lowest of the people,—a suit which at the first glance seems only to concern the payment of two or three drachmas,—a suit about a thing so slight that the law appears to have totally omitted to declare whether it can be considered as property at all,—a suit about what a subtle dialectician might declare to be not even a thing,—in a word, a dispute about the shadow of an ass !—in what other State, I say, could such a suit come to be the subject of universal sympathy,—an affair of everybody, and indeed, I may venture to say, an affair of the whole State ? In what other republic are the laws of property so clearly defined, the rights, or presumed rights, of the citizens so closely guarded from all arbitrary encroachment on the part of the highest personages ? Where else can it be said that the slightest claim or demand made by the poorest is weighty in the eyes of Government—that the highest

court of the republic does not deem it beneath its dignity to meet in order to decide on the doubtful right to the shadow of an ass? Woe to the man who sneers at this word, and, out of silly, childish notions of what is great and what is little, can look with a foolish and derisive smile on that which is at once the highest honour of our public justice, the glory of our Government, and the triumph at once of every good citizen and of the whole Abderite commonwealth! Woe to the man, I repeat it a second and a third time, who has no heart to feel this! and all honour to the republic, which, the moment it concerns the rights of citizens, or involves a doubt about the *meum et tuum*—the principle of all civil security—regards even an ass's shadow as no trifle! But while, on the one hand, I feel, with all the warmth of a patriot and all the pride of a true Abderite, how glorious a proof is such a suit of the excellence of our constitution and of the zeal and impartiality of our Government, so, on the other hand, how deeply must I lament this decay of our ancient simplicity,—the fading out of that friendly and neighbourly feeling, that ready tendering of mutual services, which springs out of a good heart, or at least out of a good humour, and would rather lay

aside a part of that which strictly belongs to us than too rigidly exact it ! How much must I mourn the extinction of that good feeling, which, had it survived, would have prevented this disgraceful action ! How can I, without the blush of shame, carry on the narration ? O noble kindness and generosity of our good forefathers ! are ye so utterly banished that Abderite citizens, who ought at every opportunity to be willing to share their hearts with each other, out of patriotic love and neighbourly friendship, are become so selfish, so mean, so niggardly, nay, so inhuman, as to quarrel about the shadow of an ass ?

“ Though—forgive me, worthy fellow-citizens—I am wrong in my expressions ; forgive me an unpremeditated error. He who has displayed so rude, so mean, so barbarous a mind, is no fellow-citizen of ours ; he is merely a tolerated dweller in our city, a mere *protégé* of Jason’s temple, one of the very dregs of the people, a man from whom, by reason of his birth, parentage, and education, nothing better was to be expected,—in a word, an ass-driver, who, besides the ground he treads on and the air he breathes, has nothing in common with us—nothing else save what the wildest tribes of the hyperborean

wastes have with us too. His disgrace rests on him alone—it cannot defile us. A citizen of Abdera, I take on me to say, could not have been guilty of such a crime. But perhaps I call it by too strong a term—a crime? Place yourselves, I pray you, in the position of your fellow-citizen Struthion, and feel! He was travelling on business—business connected with the noble science which he professes, and whose sole object is the alleviation of human sufferings—from Abdera to Gerania. The day was one of the hottest of summer; the glowing heat of the sun seemed to have changed the vault of heaven into that of a baker's oven. No cloud came over those scorching rays, no soft-breathing zephyr refreshed the weary traveller. The sun beamed down on his devoted head, exhausting his frame and breath, and the very marrow of his bones! Suffering from intense thirst, with parched tongue nearly cleaving to the roof of his mouth, and almost blinded with the glare and heat, he sought some shady spot where he might repose—some isolated but compassionate tree, under which he might rest and inhale a mouthful of fresh air, and be sheltered for a moment from the burning arrows of the inexorable Apollo. In vain! You know the whole country between

Abdera and Gerania,—three leagues in length, and, to the shame of all Thrace be it said, no tree, no shrub, for the wanderer's anxious eye to rest upon, amidst the frightful waste of meagre fallows and scarcely less meagre corn-fields !

“The poor Struthion sank down at last beside his beast, almost in a state of insensibility—nature could endure it no longer. He let go his hold of the ass, and sat down in its shadow,—poor miserable refreshment, but, miserable as it was, it was something. And what a monster must the unfeeling, stony-hearted wretch be who could deny to a suffering fellow-creature this scanty solace !—would you believe it possible that such a being could exist, if you did not see him before your eyes? Yes! here he is, and what is still more despicable, still more incredible, than the crime itself, he stands here of his own accord—he seems to glory in his shame; and, that he may leave to none who shall come after him the possibility of rivalling him in insolence, he carries it so far, after having already had a verdict against him by the ordinary courts of the country, as to declare before this right worshipful court of the four hundred, that he is in the right! ‘I did not deny him,’ says he,

‘the ass’s shadow, though, according to strict right, I was not obliged to allow him to sit in it: I merely asked him for a reasonable remuneration, that I should give up to him, in addition to the ass which I *had* let him, the shadow which I had not.’ Wretched, scandalous evasion! What should we think of the man who would forbid a poor half-fainting wayfarer to sit in the shadow of his tree unless he paid for it? or in what terms should we describe the man who would prevent the wearied traveller, dying with thirst, from bathing his parched lips with the water that flowed through his grounds?

“Remember, O men of Abdera, that this alone and no other was the offence of the Lycian peasants, whom the father of gods and men, to avenge a similar piece of inhumanity which these wretches exercised towards his beloved Latona, changed, as an awful warning to posterity, into frogs? This fearful wonder is daily kept in remembrance among us by the holy grove and pool of Latona, the tutelary deity of our city. And thou, Anthrax, thou—a dweller in the State where this dreadful proof of the divine wrath against the rashness of mankind is consecrated by a perpetual worship,—art thou not afraid to bring down that wrath on thyself

by a similar transgression? But thou art trusting in the right of property. He who avails himself of this right, you say, does no man wrong. 'I owe no man more than he deserves of me. If the ass be my property, so is the shadow!'

"Do you say so? And do you believe—or rather does the able and learned advocate in whose hands you have placed the most disreputable case that ever gods or men were called upon to judge,—does he expect, with all the witchery of his eloquence, or with all the webs of sophistical argument he can spin, to circumvent and overpower our understanding to such a degree as to persuade us that a shadow can be reckoned as anything real at all, much less a thing to which a direct and exclusive right can be made out?

"Honourable gentlemen, I should be abusing your patience, and insulting your wisdom, if I were to repeat all the grounds on which I have demonstrated in previous actions the nullity of the plaintiff's claim. I content myself for the present to say, just out of bare necessity, thus much. A shadow cannot, strictly speaking, be reckoned among actual existences at all; for that which makes it to be a shadow is not any-

thing real and positive, but precisely the contrary, namely, the privation of that light which falls on the shadow-giving-body. In the present case, the oblique rays of the sun and the intransparency of the ass (a property which belongs to him not as an ass, but as an opaque body) are the only true causes of the shadow which the ass appeared to cast, and which any other body in the same direction would cast; for the figure of the shadow has nothing to do with the point in dispute. My client has therefore, to speak scientifically, not so much rested himself in the shadow of an ass as in that of an opaque body. Now that that body was an ass, and that ass an intimate acquaintance and, I may say, friend of one Anthrax, a *protégé* of the priesthood of Jason in Abdera, was of just as little advantage to him (Anthrax), as it was of consequence in the matter before the court; for, as I have said, it was not the asinity or asshood, but merely the corporeity and intransparency of the aforesaid ass, which was the cause of the shadow which he seemed to cast.

“But, even if we admit that shadows are things, it is a clear and well-understood fact that they belong to the class of common things,

to which every man has an equal right, and which belong, therefore, rightfully to him who first takes possession of them.

“But I will go further. Even if I admit that not only are shadows things, but that the shadow of the ass belonged to the ass as much as his ears, what will my opponent gain thereby? Struthion hired the ass, therefore he hired the shadow; for it follows, from every contract of letting and hiring, that he who lets gives over to him who hires the thing hired with all that belongs to it, with all its utility and all rights of usage. With what shadow of right, then, can Anthrax require to be paid extra for its shadow? The dilemma is without all contradiction. Either the shadow is a part of and belonging to the ass, or it is not: if not, then Struthion had just as much right to it as Anthrax; if it be, then Anthrax, when he let the ass to hire, let the shadow also, and his present demand is as unreasonable as though a man should first sell me a lute and then expect me to pay for the tunes I played on it. Though why should there be so much argument about a thing which must be as clear to the commonplace sense of mankind as the sun at noonday?

What is the shadow of an ass?—and what shamelessness on the part of Anthrax, since he had no real right in it, to feign one in order to make usurious gain by it! And even if he had a right to it, what unspeakable meanness to deny to a fellow-man—a neighbour and a friend—a thing the very smallest and slightest we can think of, altogether useless in almost every other conjuncture,—to deny this, I say, just at the very moment when it was indispensable to him!

“Noble and ever-honoured judges, let it never be said of Abdera, that such an offence—such a churlish disregard of humanity—could find defenders in a court before which, like that renowned one in Athens, the gods themselves need not blush to refer their causes.

“The rejection of the plaintiff’s illegal, unrighteous, and ridiculous plea, his condemnation in all costs and charges which by his self-will and obstinacy he has brought upon the innocent defendant, is the least that I can demand in the name of my client. But still the plaintiff ought to be compelled to give satisfaction—and sufficient satisfaction too—commensurate with the greatness of his offence;—satisfaction to the defendant, whose domestic peace, business, honour, and reputation, have been injured to an

incalculable degree by the plaintiff and his supporters during the course of this litigation;—satisfaction to the honourable Government, from whose judgment pronounced by the ordinary courts he has insolently appealed without ground to this high tribunal;—satisfaction to this honourable court itself, which he has compelled to occupy itself with a cause so contemptible;—and, finally, satisfaction to the whole State and republic of Abdera, which on such frivolous grounds he has placed in circumstances of tumult and disorder.

“Honourable” judges, do I ask too much?—do I ask anything unreasonable? See here the whole of Abdera pressing in countless masses on the very steps of this most noble court, and, in the name of a deserving and ill-used fellow-citizen—in the name of the republic itself—seeking, nay, demanding satisfaction. Reverence for authority binds their tongues, but I see flashing from their eyes this reasonable, this not-lightly-to-be-refused demand. The confidence of our citizens, the security of our rights, the restoration of our long-disturbed peace, the continuance of that tranquillity for the future—in a word, the welfare of our whole State—hangs in suspense upon the verdict which you are now

about to pronounce—hangs in anxious and breathless expectation; and as, in the earliest ages of the world, an ass had the honour of awaking the slumbering gods, when the Titans were about to make their nocturnal attack upon them, and thereby saving Olympus itself from ravage and destruction, so now the shadow of an ass may have the opportunity (and may this day be the happy epoch!) of rescuing this great and ancient city from many and terrible dangers.

“Let us hope that it may be the means of cementing the bond between governors and governed, of sinking all past differences in an abyss of oblivion, by vindicating the State by the punishment of a presumptuous ass-driver; and may Abdera flourish for ever!”

CHAPTER XIV.

Reply of the sycophant Polyphonus.

As soon as Physignathus had finished his speech, the people, or rather the mob which crowded the market-place, testified their approbation by a shout so long and so loud that the judges began to fear it would be a permanent hindrance to the proceedings. The party of Agathysus fell into some perplexity. The Shadows, on the contrary, though conscious that they made but a minority in the great council, plucked up fresh courage, and premised a favourable result to their cause from the impression which the speech must have made upon the Asses. In the mean time, the guildmaster Awl did his best by signs to bring the people to quietness, and when the herald had made his threefold call to silence, with some effect, forth stepped Polyphonus, the advocate of the ass-driver, a thick-

set, powerfully-built man, with short, crisp hair, and thick coal-black eyebrows. Lifting up a deep bass tone which resounded through the whole forum, he delivered himself as follows:—

“Most mighty judges! Truth and light have this peculiarity above all other things in the world—they want no strange help to make them visible. I yield to my opponent willingly all the advantages which he has endeavoured to obtain by means of his eloquence.

“He who is in the wrong may try to throw dust in the eyes of fools and children by tropes and figures and all the legerdemain of school rhetoric: prudent men are not blinded thereby. I shall not examine how much fame and honour the republic of Abdera may gain through this law-suit about an ass’s shadow; I shall neither seek to delude the judges by gross flatteries, nor to influence them by implied threats; still less, by discursive observations, will I seek to give the populace a signal for uproar and sedition—I know why I am here, and to whom I am speaking; in short, I shall content myself with proving that the ass-driver Anthrax is in the right. The judges will then know, without any reminder of mine, what their duty is.”

At this passage a few of the mob who stood

nearest on the steps of the terrace began to interrupt the speaker with shouts, yells, and menaces. But when the nomophylax rose from his ivory throne, the heralds again commanded silence, lifted up their partisans threatening-wise, all was still again, and the orator, who did not quite so easily recover the interruption, proceeded with his speech.

“Mighty lords, I stand here not as the advocate of the ass-driver Anthrax, but as the counsel for Jason’s temple, and on behalf of the most reverend and noble Agathysus, the present arch-priest of the same, guardian of the true golden fleece, and protector of all the interests, things, and persons connected therewith, head and chief of the most noble race of the Jasonians, &c.; and I am, in the name of Jason and his temple, to demand of you that satisfaction be given to the ass-driver Anthrax, *because he has a good right to it*, and I am confident that I shall be able to prove this, notwithstanding all the oratorical tricks which my learned opponent boasts of having acquired from his master Gorgias, and to prove this so clearly that the very blind shall see it, and the very deaf shall hear it. And now, without further preface, to the matter in dispute. Anthrax let out his ass to

the dentist Struthion for the day, not for *any* use he chose to make of it, but to carry him and his saddle-bags from here to Gerania, which, as everybody knows, is eight good miles distant. At the time of hiring the ass, naturally enough neither of the parties thought about his shadow. But when the dentist, in the middle of his journey, dismounted, left the ass, which had, of course, suffered more from the heat than he had, to stand in the sun, and seated himself in the shadow, it was equally natural that the owner and master of the ass should not remain indifferent.

“I admit at once that Anthrax gave a very ridiculous and stupid turn to his claim when he demanded of this jaw-breaker an additional sum on account of the shadow, because, forsooth, he had not let that with the ass; but we must remember that he is only an ass-driver, and the descendant of similar ass-drivers—that is, a man who has been brought up among mere asses, and has really kept more company with such than with reasonable beings. He has, in fact, acquired a sort of right to be very little better than an ass himself. You are not to wonder that his jest should be the jest of an ass-driver; but in what class of animals shall we rank him who turned this jest into earnest?

"If Mr. Struthion had only behaved like a reasonable man, he would have only needed to say, 'Good friend, we won't quarrel about the donkey's shadow. I have not, it is true, hired the donkey to sit in his shadow, but to ride to Gerania, and so it is reasonable enough that I should remunerate you for the few minutes' loss of time which I occasion you, especially as the donkey will have to stand all the longer in the heat, and will not be any the better for it. There, my good fellow, there is half a drachma for you. Let me get a moment's breathing-time, and then, in the name of all the frogs, we will go on our journey again!'

"Now, had the dentist only spoken in this tone, he would have spoken like an honourable and reasonable man. The ass-driver would, for the extra half-drachma, have replied 'By all means,' and the city of Abdera would have been spared all the fame which my accomplished opponent promises her on account of this ass's shadow law-suit, and all the disturbance which must go on to plague and vex her so long as so many distinguished gentlemen, and *ladies* too, are mixed up in the litigation. Instead of which, the man rides his own hobby, claims for himself an unfounded right, by reason of his

contract of hiring, to sit in the shadow of the donkey as long and as often as he pleases, puts the ass-driver in a passion; and all he gets by it is, that the latter goes before the police-magistrate, and makes a complaint, which is just as absurd and unreasonable as the defence. Whether it would not be an exceedingly useful example to slit off the ears of my excellent friend Physignathus, to whose agitation this suit owes its existence, and to whose persuasion it is due that the worthy jaw-breaker did not acquiesce in the pacification proposed by the most worshipful Philippides, and in place of the same to stitch on a pair of ass's ears, in token of the everlasting gratitude of the Abderite republic, and whether it would not be advisable to do the same honour to the guildmaster of the cordwainers' company, and those gentlemen who have taken the trouble to fling oil upon the fire, —this I leave to the wise consideration of the accomplished judges. My principal, the most reverend arch-priest, will not fail on his part to give the ass-driver Anthrax a cool dozen at the cart's tail for his unutterable and most mischievous folly in all this transaction. This, as his especial judge and superior, he will faithfully promise the republic to do.

“But as this proceeding, however just and proper in itself, does not at all touch the question before the court—viz. the right of the ass-driver against Struthion the dentist, the ill use this latter made of the unlucky beast by sitting down in its shadow instead of riding on its back, and the necessity of some remuneration for the loss of time and additional labour cast on the donkey itself—so the most reverend arch-priest demands, on the part of this honourable tribunal, the most complete and entire satisfaction for his humble dependant, and that without further delay.

“To you, gentlemen,” he added, turning round his head, and bowing to the people, “permit me to announce in the name of Jason, that all those who in a riotous and turbulent way take part in the offence of the jaw-breaker, until they humbly and penitently make their confession and retractation of the same, are and will be excluded from any participation in those monthly gifts which from the temple of Jason are bestowed upon the poorer citizens.

“I have done.”

CHAPTER XV.

Commotion which the speech of Polyphonus occasioned.

—Supplementary speech of Physignathus.—Embarrassment of the judge.

THE manner in which the case had been stated by Polyphonus had so good an effect, that of the assembled four hundred scarcely twenty could be found who, according to Abderite custom, did not declare that they had seen through the affair from the very beginning; and a few rather energetic expressions were heard against those who had allowed so simple a case to run through such complicated proceedings. The majority seemed, indeed, to agree, not only that the arch-priest had a right to demand satisfaction for his dependant, but that a commission ought to be appointed at once by the great council to investigate as closely as possible the whole proceedings, in order to find out who were

the first inciters and promoters of this notorious law-suit. This proposition brought the guild-master, and those who in spite of all consequences still clave to his party, once more on the scene. The sycophant Physignathus again took courage, and obtained from the nomophylax permission once more to speak, on the ground that he had something new to adduce against the reasonings of his adversary; and as this could not be legally refused him, he addressed the court in the following terms:—

“If to treat so distinguished a court as this, high and mighty lords, with that reverence which is due to it, is to be branded with the name of flattery,—a term which my learned opponent has not blushed to apply to it,—I must certainly sit down under an imputation that I can in no way avoid. I think, however, I offend less in my high opinion of this tribunal than he does by imagining it capable of falling into so gross a snare as he has laid for it. The appearance of sound reason which his decided way of putting the case exhibits, and a certain tone which he seems to have borrowed from his client, can at most produce only a momentary surprise; but that they should be able wholly

to overthrow the wisdom of the highest court in Abdera, would be as much cowardice in me to fear, as it would be presumption in him to hope. What! Polyphonus, instead of boldly asserting the justice of his client's case as he did before the city magistrate, now turns round and confesses that the ass-driver has acted stupidly and illegally in founding his complaint against the dentist on any imaginary right of property in the shadow of the donkey; he openly admits that the action is a ridiculous, groundless, and frivolous one, and yet permits himself, and very much in the tone and manner of an ass-driver too, to demand satisfaction! What a new and unheard-of jurisprudence must that be which admits its client to be in the wrong, cannot deny that he deserves a cool dozen at the cart's tail—a punishment which a fellow like Anthrax would take without wincing—promises that he shall have it, and then—demands a verdict!

“Let it be granted that the fault of the ass-driver consisted simply in bringing a wrong action: what is that to his innocent opponent or to the judges? The former must frame his reply according to the complaint, and the latter must judge, not from what might be said

were the case represented to them from a different point of view, but from what is actually brought before them. I promise myself, in the name of my client, that the matter will be decided not according to this new rule which Polyphonus has attempted to establish, and which is totally at variance with all that has hitherto been pleaded on his side, but according to the form and tenor of the complaint itself. The matter in dispute is not the loss of time and the deterioration of the beast, but the ass's shadow. The plaintiff declares that his property in the ass extends to its shadow, and he has not proved it. The defendant asserts that he had acquired as much right to the shadow as the plaintiff, or, in other words, that by his contract of hire he had obtained a right to any advantage which might be gained thereby; and what he asserts he has proved. I stand here, high and mighty lords, and demand a judicial award on that which has hitherto formed the ground of dispute. On that account alone is the matter brought before this supreme tribunal. This alone is what this honourable court has to decide, and I take upon me to say, in the presence of all this listening people, that either justice is not to be found in Abdera, or my

demand is legal; and the rights of every citizen are in peril unless my client can secure his own."

The advocate stopped; the judges were shaken, the people began to murmur again and to become restless, and the Shadows lifted up their heads with hope.

"Now," said the nomophylax, turning to Polyphonus, "what has the plaintiff's counsel to say to all this?"

"Most honourable sir," replied Polyphonus, "nothing, but just word for word what I have already said. This litigation about an ass's shadow is a contemptible litigation, and cannot too soon be brought to a conclusion. The plaintiff has been in the wrong, the defendant has been in the wrong, the city magistrate was in the wrong,—all Abdera has been in the wrong. One would think that some evil wind had blown upon us all, and that our intellects had not been quite so clear as could be wished. If, however, folly prevail, and we are to carry on the absurdity any longer, I should only waste breath to go on speaking from morning till night on behalf of my client and his right to the donkey's shadow.

"But, as I have already said, if the comedy which we have been playing is to be excused

simply because it is comedy, at least it seems to me scarcely respectful that we should go on playing it any longer before so august a tribunal as this. I at least have no instructions to that purpose, and I therefore spare you, most honourable judges, the further repetition of all that I have already said, "only entreating you, in the name of the most reverend and learned the arch-priest, now to finish this suit, and to decide as the gods shall direct you."

The judges were in greater perplexity than ever, and it is hard to say what means they would have found to come creditably out of the difficulty, if chance, which from all antiquity has been the tutelary deity of the Abderites, had not taken the decision upon itself, and given this civic drama a *dénouement* which a moment before the wisest of mankind could not have foreseen.

CHAPTER XVI.

Unexpected *dénouement* of the whole comedy, and restoration of tranquillity to the city of Abdera.

THE ass, whose shadow had, according to the expression of the archon Onolaus, so singularly obfuscated the brains of the Abderites, was awaiting the issue, still shut up in the public stable, and up to this time was tolerably supplied with fodder. The best that we can say is, that he grew no fatter. One of the ostlers employed by the republic suddenly recollected that the cause was now drawing near to a close, and thought it only right that the ass himself, by no means the least considerable personage in the drama, should be of the party. He was accordingly well groomed, adorned with garlands and ribands, and brought forward, followed by an innumerable procession of jeering street-boys, in great pomp to the place of meeting.

Now, as chance would have it, this ragamuffin procession arrived in the street next to the forum, just at the moment when Polyphonus had ended his harangue, and the judges were in sad perplexity how to decide: the people, too, divided between their reverence for the arch-priest, and the impression which the last speech of Physignathus had made upon them, were in a very similar dilemma.

The uproar made by the street-boys about the donkey here caught their attention; they turned their heads, paused, and then pressed forward.

"Ha!" cried out one of the crowd, "here comes the ass himself."

"He is just in time to help the judges to a decision," exclaimed another.

"That confounded ass!" shrieked a third, "he has brought us all to the very verge of ruin. I wish the wolves had devoured him before he had saddled us with this abominable law-suit!"

"Hurrah!" exclaimed a tinker who had always been a zealous Shadow, "those who are true Abderites, follow me! Down with the donkey! —let not even a hair of his accursed tail be left!"

In a moment the whole assembly flung them-

selves on the poor beast, and before a hand could be raised to prevent the act, it was torn into a thousand pieces. Everybody wanted a bit of the carcase,—they tore, they raved, they fought, they screamed, they panted, they puffed: the like had never been seen in Abdera before. Some were so mad as to devour their morsels without waiting even for the most extemporaneous cookery; but the greater part ran home, followed by a crowd which sought to tear the prey out of their hands. The tumult was quieted as suddenly as it arose; in a few minutes the forum was empty, and as still as midnight.

The four hundred were at the first outbreak of this uproar, the cause of which they could not see, plunged into the greatest consternation. Without knowing what they did, they drew out their daggers from under their robes, where they had slyly hidden them for fear of accidents, and the whole assembly stared at one another with no little astonishment, each gentleman, from the nomophylax to the lowest officer, with a glittering dagger in his hand. But when at last they saw and heard what the matter was, they popped their daggers back again as quickly as they could, and burst out, like the gods in the

first book of the Iliad, into a roar of inextinguishable laughter.

"Thanks to Heaven!" cried the nomophylax, as soon as the gentlemen had come to themselves again; "with all our wisdom we could never have brought the matter to a more fitting conclusion. Why should we now puzzle our brains any longer about the affair? The donkey, the guiltless cause of this troublesome action, has been, as usual, offered up a sacrifice to it. The people have cooled their fury in his blood, and we now on our side only want a decent conclusion. This day, which began as though it would have ended badly for the republic, will now, we hope, witness the restoration of tranquillity. As the ass himself is no more, why should there be any longer disputing about his shadow? I therefore propose that this cause be considered at an end, that both parties be paid their expenses out of the public treasury, that an eternal silence be observed about the whole transaction; but, lest our posterity should forget how nearly a flourishing State was brought to destruction by a cause of no greater intrinsic importance than an ass's shadow, I also move that a monument should be erected by the city to the ass himself."

Everybody applauded the motion of the nomophylax, as the wisest which, under the circumstances of the case, could be arrived at. It was calculated to satisfy both parties, and the republic purchased the restoration of peace at a cheap rate. The whole four hundred gave their assent to the proposition, which was thus carried successfully, though it was not without some trouble that Mr. Guildmaster Awl was induced to acquiesce.

The great council, preceded by one troop and followed by another of the civic guard, escorted the nomophylax to his house, where he stopped on the threshold and invited his colleagues, all and sundry, to a monster concert which he intended to give by way of celebrating the return of domestic tranquillity.

The arch-priest Agathyrsus not only forgave the ass-driver the "cool dozen" which Polyphonus had been so kind as to promise him, but presented him with three fine mules out of his own stable, with the especial injunction not to take a single farthing by way of indemnification out of the Abderite treasury.

The following day he entertained all the Shadows (Shadows now no more) of the greater and lesser councils at a sumptuous dinner, and

in the evening he caused a donation of half a drachma to be made to every craftsman in the city to drink to the health of himself and all good Abderites. This liberality won back for him all hearts, and as the Abderites were a people to whom it cost nothing to pass from one extremity to another, it will not be considered extraordinary that in a few weeks the very names of asses and shadows were almost forgotten—so great was the effect of this noble conduct on the part of him who headed the stronger party.

The Abderites themselves laughed over their own folly as a fit of feverish insanity, now thank the gods ! over for ever. One of their ballad-mongers, of whom they had a great many, and very bad ones too, did what he could to put the whole transaction into street-rhymes, that it might be sung up and down highways and byways ; and Thlaps the dramatist, of whom honourable mention has been made already, did not fail within a month to prepare a thlapsody on the subject, to which the nomophylax composed the music. This beautiful work was received with every mark of approbation, and both parties laughed at it as heartily as though the matter did not refer to them at all.

Democritus, whom the arch-priest had persuaded to accompany him to the theatre, observed as they went out together, "At least we must allow that the Abderites have one point of resemblance with the Athenians, and that is, that they can heartily and good-humouredly laugh at their own absurdities. It is true they will be none the wiser on this account; but it is always so much gained when a nation can suffer clever and well-meaning people to make merry over its follies, and has the good sense to laugh with them, instead of becoming as spiteful as so many apes."

This was the last play that Democritus attended in his native city, for shortly after, without telling a living soul where he was going, he left Abdera, bag and baggage, and was never heard of again.

BOOK V.
THE FROGS OF LATONA.

CHAPTER I.

First rise of the evil that subsequently caused the destruction of Abdera.—Policy of the arch-priest Agathyrus.—He causes a frog-pool of his own to be dug.—Nearer and more remote consequences of this new institution.

THE republic of Abdera now enjoyed for some years as complete a quiet as could have been expected. The perilous episode of the ass's shadow had been, thanks to the whimsical genius of the State, safely passed through, and had it been possible for Abderites to remain long in tranquillity, an unbroken calm might have been promised to the city. But there was a hidden cause ever working for their destruction, and all the more to be dreaded as, in place of fearing, they loved and cherished it.

The Abderites, as we have already seen, revered Latona as their tutelary divinity. Now, whatever may be objected to the worship of Latona, at least it was one which they had inherited from their forefathers, and in this respect they were certainly not more careless than other Greek republics. It would not be a matter of much consequence whether they worshipped Minerva like the Athenians, or Juno like the Samians, or Diana like the Ephesians, or Venus like the Paphians, or whether they chose Latona: as the case stood, any form of religion was better than none. But the worship of Latona might have been carried on without that of the holy frogs. What necessity was there to prop up the simple faith of their Teian ancestors by so dangerous a buttress? Why should they keep the frogs of Latona, when they had Latona herself? Or, if their Abderite faith required some visible monument of the change into frogs which the Lycian peasants had undergone, it might have been managed by half a dozen stuffed frogs kept in a glass case, covered with a brocaded cloth, in a chapel of Latona's temple, and solemnly exhibited once a year to the people with suitable ceremonies.

Democritus, their fellow-citizen, had given them a word or two of good caution ; but then Democritus was a man whom nobody credited very much, because he had the bad reputation of believing nothing himself. He had told them that it was very easy, especially when frogs were concerned, to be too devout. His ears, after twenty years' absence, were more sensitive to the continual chorus, *κεκ-κεκ-κεκ-κοαξ-κοαξ*, which resounded night and day about him, than the somewhat thicker and perhaps somewhat longer organs of the other Abderites, not to speak of their being accustomed to the croaking.

Once or twice he had spoken sharply against their "*batracholatry*," as he called it, and, partly in jest, partly in earnest, had prophesied to them that unless they took proper precautions their croaking fellow-citizens would in time croak them all out of the town. The aristocracy might on this point joke as they liked, for they were not desirous of being considered believers in the frogs of Latona more than Democritus himself.

But the mischief was, that he never could, either by satire or serious advice, bring them to look at the matter from a reasonable point of view. If he joked, they joked with him : if he

spoke seriously, they joked at him, and wondered that he could be serious about such a matter; and thus, notwithstanding every objection, things remained in Abdera in this respect, just as in every other, *in statu quo*. Nevertheless, in the time of Democritus, a certain laxity of belief and practice was evidently gaining ground among the younger nobles of Abdera. The priest Strobilus, complained bitterly that in the best houses the frog-pools, which their ancestors had carefully kept up in their gardens, the present holders ~~were~~ sadly neglecting. The common people alone held fast in this respect to the laudable old custom, and showed their reverence for the holy pool by voluntary contributions towards its sustentation.

Now who would have supposed that of all the Abderites the very last man on whom any suspicion of batracholatry would have fallen—viz. the arch-priest Agathysus himself—should have been the man who, after the settlement of the feud between the Asses and Shadows, stirred up the cooling zeal of his fellow-citizens on behalf of the frogs?

It would perhaps be impossible to exculpate him in this step from an inconsistency between his internal convictions and his external con-

duct; and if we had not some clue to his mode of thinking in other matters, this last would be quite inexplicable. But we know that the arch-priest was naturally a very ambitious man. He had seen himself during the late tumults at the head of a considerable party, and he had no inclination to exchange this advantage for anything less than an enduring influence over the whole State, now happily restored to tranquillity.

This he could only attain by an overwhelming popularity and a certain concession to the prejudices of the multitude, which was to him so much the easier, as he regarded religion merely as a political engine. Like many of his class, it was to him a matter of perfect indifference what the object of reverence might be—frogs, or owls, or fleeces: that to him was best which offered to him the wisest and readiest means of satisfying his darling passion.

To this end, and to retain in the cheapest manner the esteem and favour of the people, he not only banished the storks of which the guardians of the holy pool had complained from all the precincts of Jason's temple, but he carried his concessions to his new friends so far as to cut a canal through an esplanade which one of his ancestors had consecrated to the use of the

people, and filled it with frog-spawn, brought in casks out of the holy pool. This he had obtained by a most courteous application to Strobylus, who accompanied the casks and witnessed the transportation himself, followed by all the idle rabble of Abdera. It may be mentioned by the bye, that Agathysus made a handsome offering to the temple of Latona by way of compensation.

From this time forward Agathysus was the idol of the people. A frog-trench dug just at the right moment had done for him what all his eloquence, liberality, courtesy, and policy would not have accomplished in half a century. He reigned as absolutely as a king in Abdera, without ever entering the council-chamber; and because he entertained two or three times a week all the senators and guildmasters at sumptuous dinners, and only insinuated his commands in full bumpers of the finest Chian wine, nobody ever dreamed of objecting to so amiable a tyranny. The gentlemen of the council never imagined that their principles were not their own, though, in fact, their notes were only the echoes of the dining-room of Agathysus. He was himself, it is true, the first among trusty friends to make merry over his new frog-moat;

but then the people heard nothing about that, and as, among the nobles of Abdera, his example had more effect than his jokes, it was amusing to see how the old trenches in all gardens were reopened, and new ones cut where there were none before.

In this remarkable city all follies were contagious: before long nobody was free from this new one. At first it was only a fashion, a thing which belonged to good society: a citizen of substance would have thought it a disgrace to be behind his wealthy neighbours. But unconsciously it grew to be a requisite of good citizenship, and the man who could not show his frog-pond within four palings would have been regarded as an enemy of Latona and a traitor to his country. When the zeal of private persons waxed so warm, it is not to be expected that less would be displayed by the senate, the guild-masters, and the dignitaries of state. Each guild had its own frog-pool. In every open place in the city, even before the senate-house, where the cabbage and oyster women made noise enough before, were basins constructed for the croaking race; and the college of ediles, which had especially the charge of beautifying the city, at last hit upon the ex-

pedient of cutting small canals through the groves by which Abdera was encompassed, and giving them up as a new possession to the frogs.

The plan was brought before the senate and passed without opposition, although it was avowedly necessary to drain the river Nestus to supply all these frog-reservoirs with water. Neither the cost of all these operations, nor the manifold evils occasioned by the diminution of water in the river, seemed to excite any attention; and when a young member of the council observed that the river Nestus was become little better than a marsh, "So much the better," said one of the guardians of the frogs; "we shall have a trench the more without its costing the republic a farthing."

Those who derived the most benefit from this fancy of beautifying a city by means of frog-ponds were the priests of Latona. For though they sold the spawn out of the holy pool very cheaply, viz. for the Abderite cyathus (*i. e.* about a pint of our measure) only two drachmas, yet it was calculated that during the first two or three years, when this enthusiasm was at its height, they had cleared more than five thousand daries. The sum seems too high for probability, although it is not to be denied that

for the spawn which they supplied to the State they received twice as much out of the public chest.

Nobody in Abdera troubled himself about the consequences of these petty institutions. The consequences came, however, nevertheless. But because they did not make their appearance all at once, not only were they not looked for, but, when they were too evident to be ignored any longer even by Abderites, even then they were not recognized as coming from the source which has been indicated.

The physicians puzzled their wits to find out why colds, rheumatisms, headaches, and agues increased from year to year—why they were so much more obstinate than of old—why, in fact, they bade defiance to all the skill of Abdera and all the physic of Anticyra. In short, Abdera and the whole region round about was being fast converted into one unsightly, unhealthy frog-marsh; nor had it yet occurred to any one of their philosophers to inquire whether the unlimited multiplication of frogs might not perhaps be so prejudicial to a State as to more than counterbalance all the advantages which the piously-disposed expected to obtain from it.

CHAPTER II.

Character of the philosopher Korax.—History of the academy of sciences at Abdera.—Korax lays before that body a captious question concerning the frogs of Latona.—He sets himself up as the head of the Anti-froggites.—Behaviour of the priests of Latona towards this sect, and how they were induced at last to believe them to be harmless.

THE remarkable genius who first made the observation that the number of frogs in Abdera was really excessive and bore no proportion to that of the unfeathered and two-legged inhabitants, was one Korax. He was a young man of good family who had resided for some years at Athens, and in the academy, as the school of Plato was generally called, had imbibed some notions not altogether favourable to the frogs of Latona: to say the truth, Latona herself had, since his residence in Athens,

sunk so much in his opinion, that it is scarcely to be wondered at if her frogs received less reverence from him than might be desired from a true Abderite. "Every beautiful woman is a goddess," he was accustomed to say, "at least a goddess of hearts, and Latona was undoubtedly a very beautiful woman. But what has that to do with frogs? and what, looking at the matter from a merely human and reasonable-point of view,—what have the frogs to do with Latona? And granted also that the goddess, for whom, by the bye, I entertain all respect due to a beautiful woman and a goddess to boot,—granted, I say, that the goddess had chosen these frogs above all other reptiles and vermin in the world to be her peculiar pets, does it therefore follow that we cannot have too many frogs?"

Korax was, at the time when he began thus to reason, a member of the academy which had been established in Abdera in imitation of that at Athens; for the Abderites, as we have had occasion to remark before, were quite determined to have everything that the Athenians had. This academy was a little grove planned out in walks, and situated close to the city; and as it was under the protection

of the senate, and had been laid out at the cost of the State, the college of ediles had not neglected, according to their plan of beautifying the city, to provide it abundantly with frog-pools. The members of the academy frequently found themselves disturbed in their deepest meditations by the croaking chorus of these noisy melodists. But as this would have been the case just the same in any other part of Abdera, they bore it the more patiently; or perhaps, to speak more accurately, everybody in Abdera was so accustomed to the croaking of the frogs that they heard it no more than the inhabitants of Niagara do the great fall in the vicinity of which they live, or than the neighbours of any other waterfall in the world.

But with Korax, whose ears, by his residence at Athens, had recovered their usual susceptibility, the case was different. It will not seem strange that he made the most pointed observations on the nuisance at the first meeting which he attended: he remarked that the screech-owl of Minerva was better qualified as an extraordinary member of the academy than the frogs of Latona.

"I do not know," said he, "what you think

of it, gentlemen; but it seems to me that the frogs have increased in an intolerable degree lately here in Abdera."

The Abderites were a stupid people, as we all know, and, with the exception of one far-famed nation, there were probably none in the world which could rival them in the faculty of not seeing the wood on account of the trees. But this much must be conceded to them, that when one among their number stumbled upon an observation that anybody else might have made before him, but did not make, they awoke as out of a sleep, marvelled very much at the discovery, and considered themselves greatly obliged to him who had made it.

"Indeed," said the gentlemen of the academy, "the frogs have for some time past increased in a very astonishing manner."

"When I say," replied Korax, "in an intolerable degree, I do not wish to be understood as implying that there is anything unnatural about it. In fact, nothing is more to be expected than that frogs should increase in a monstrous ratio when such measures are taken for their support. The only thing incredible, in my opinion, is that a people should be found so simple as to permit it."

The assembled members of the academy started at the freedom of this speech, and seemed a little perplexed what to think of the matter.

"I speak only from a human point of view," said Korax.

"We do not doubt it in the least," replied the president of the academy, who was also a senator and one of the Decemviri; "but the academy has made itself a law not to touch on such delicate topics, on which reason may be so easily misled."

"The academy at Athens has made no such law," added Korax boldly; "if philosophy is not to touch on all things, it would be better for it to touch on—nothing at all."

"On all things," said the president, with a significant gesture, "but not on Latona and——"

"Her frogs," added Korax with a smile. This was really what the president intended to say, but with the word "and" there came over his mind a kind of suspicion that he was about to utter a folly, and so he stopped suddenly with his mouth open, and left Korax to finish the sentence for him.

"Such a thing may be regarded from various

points of view, and in different lights," said Korax, "and to do this is, as it seems to me, exactly what is becoming for a philosopher, and that which distinguishes him from the unthinking multitude. Our frogs, for example, may be considered first simply as *frogs*, and then as *frogs of Latona*. Now, so far as they are merely frogs, they are no more than other frogs. Their relation towards the people of Abdera is exactly the same as that of all other frogs to all other men, and thus far nothing can be more innocent than the inquiry whether the number of frogs is or is not in due proportion to the number of men; and, if it should appear that the State is nourishing more frogs than are needful, to deliberate upon the means through which the unreasonable number may be diminished."

"Korax speaks reasonably," said some young academicians.

"I touch on the subject only according to human reason," replied Korax.

"I would rather," answered the president, "that you would not touch on it at all."

This was the first speech which Korax flung into the inflammable brains of some speculative young Abderites. Unobserved he became the head and mouthpiece of a sect whose theories

and opinions were not looked upon in Abdera as one whit too orthodox. They were blamed, and with good reason, for not keeping their views to themselves, but, in public places and assemblies of the people, asserting that it might be doubted whether the frogs of Latona were anything more than common frogs after all. The saying that they were descended from the peasant-frogs, or frog-peasants of the Lycians, was nothing more than a silly legend; and a man might doubt the tradition itself, that Jupiter had changed the peasants into frogs in consequence of their insolence and cruelty to Latona, without therefore sinning against either Jupiter or Latona.

However that might be, it was certainly absurd, out of devotion to the beautiful Latona, to make the whole city and republic of Abdera fall into a frog-marsh. But what was more than all these arguments, was the title which was taken by Korax and his followers,—a title which would seem to have very little meaning in our day, but then, and in Abdera, and especially in the ears of the priests of Latona, it had a most ominous sound: it was that of *Batrachomachistæ*, or *Anti-froggites*! This title was the less unpleasant to those who bore it, because nearly all the

young and fair in the city were soon infected with their opinions. The priests of Latona's temple, and the college of frog-guardians, did not fail on every opportunity to show their dissatisfaction at the self-will and impiety of the Anti-froggites. And the new high-priest Stilbon—for Strobilus had been dead for some years—enlarged his book on the antiquities of Latona's temple by a long chapter on the nature of Latona's frogs. In the meanwhile, there was the more reason for him to be satisfied with the existing state of things, since, in spite of the free-thinking spirit which Korax had originated in Abdera, there was not one single frog-pond less in the city and the neighbourhood.

The philosopher and his friends were cunning enough to perceive that they could not more cheaply purchase the permission to think what they pleased about the frogs, than by doing exactly as other people did. Indeed, the wise Korax, as the person on whom all eyes were fixed, thought it better to do too much than too little. He accordingly, soon after his speech in the academy, caused to be dug on his own patrimonial estate one of the finest frog-trenches in all Abdera, and filled it with fat frogs out of the holy pool, for each of which he paid to the

priests no less than four drachmas. This was a courtesy for which these gentlemen, however little they felt bound to him in their hearts, could not fail on account of the example to appear grateful, especially as this act of the so-called philosopher gave sufficient pretence for them to say that in his irreligious talk about Latona and her frogs he was not really in earnest. "His tongue is worse than his heart," said they; "he wishes it to be thought that he is too clever to think like other people, but after all it is mere affectation. If he were not really convinced of the truth, he would not let his actions contradict his theories in the way he does. We must not judge such people according to what they say, but according to what they do."

Notwithstanding all this, Korax had undertaken no slighter labour than, like a new Hercules, Theseus, or Harmodius, that of delivering his country from the frogs, by which, as he was accustomed to say, it was threatened with a greater evil than all those which the robbers, tyrants, and monsters slain by the before-mentioned heroes, had brought upon Greece of old.

CHAPTER III.

An unfortunate accident compels the senate to notice the immense increase of frogs in Abdera.—Imprudence of the counsellor Meidias.—The majority seek the opinion of the academy. The nomophylax Hysiboas protests against this measure, and urges the high-priest Stilbon to prevent such a proceeding.

THE inconveniences which the Abderites suffered from the prodigious increase of their sacred frogs became still more pressing day by day; but the archon Onocradias (nephew of the renowned Onolaus, and, to say the truth, one of the emptiest heads that ever ruled in Abdera) never would have thought of bringing the matter before the senate had it not been for a very distressing accident. It happened, on the day of a certain great procession when the crowd in the principal streets was very great, that a few dozen frogs which had wandered

out of their ditches got trodden down by the people, and, in spite of all that could be done to rescue them, they departed this life under singularly unpleasant circumstances.

This mishap appeared so considerable that the archon felt obliged to convene an extraordinary meeting of the senate, first to inquire what satisfaction on the part of the city would be necessary to Latona, to atone for this unintentional, but not the less frightful sacrilege, and secondly, how so melancholy an occurrence could be prevented in future.

After the usual Abderite common-places had been uttered, Meidias, a relation and adherent, rose and said, "I don't understand why gentlemen should make so much ado about a half-bushel of frogs more or less. Everybody knows full well that the thing was a mere accident, at which Latona cannot possibly take offence: and as the fates which preside over gods, men, and frogs, have allowed some four-and-twenty croakers to come to an untimely end, all I can say is, I wish it had been four-and-twenty myriads."

There were not perhaps five persons in the whole senate who, in the bosom of their families or in private society, had not complained a

thousand times at least over the incredible increase of the frogs ; but now that the matter was the subject of conversation in the senate, everybody started at the boldness of Meidias : it was as though he had taken Latona herself by the throat. Some gentlemen looked quite as frightened as though they expected to see their colleague, for his rashness, changed into a frog himself before their eyes.

"I pay all due respect to the holy pool," proceeded Meidias, quite calmly (he had noticed all the effect of his previous speech), "but I appeal to the inner consciousness of all men whose common sense is not entirely exhausted, whether any one could deny without blushing that the number of frogs in Abdera is perfectly monstrous."

The senators had in the mean time recovered from their first alarm, and as they saw that Meidias sat there in his own form, and had dared to say with impunity what they all felt at bottom to be perfectly true, they began to consider one after another what the state of the case really was, and after a while it appeared to be the opinion of the whole senate that "it could be wished there were fewer frogs in Abdera!"

"No one is secure in his own house from them," said one.

"Nobody can walk in the streets," remarked another, "without running the risk of crushing half a dozen at every step."

"It is quite right," observed a third, "to have frog-ponds, but the privilege has its limits."

A fourth attested, "Had I been in the senate when it was resolved to have open frog-ponds, I certainly would not have given the measure my support."

"But who," exclaimed a fifth, "would have supposed that the frogs could multiply in such a portentous manner?"

"I could well enough," said the president of the academy, "but I had made up my mind to live at peace with the priests of Latona."

"So had I," said Meidias, "but our circumstances are none the better through that."

"And now, gentlemen, since things are so, what is to be done?" asked the archon Onocradias, in his usual shuffling tone.

"There lies the difficulty," replied the senators all at once.

"If anybody would only tell us what is to be done!" exclaimed Meidias hastily, and

then suddenly stopped. A deep silence followed ; all the senators dropped their heads on their breasts, twisted their features into an appearance of meditation, and began to reflect with all their might.

At last the archon broke silence. "And pray what have we an Academy of Sciences for?" exclaimed he, to the unutterable bewilderment of his colleagues, for no man, since his accession to the archonate, had ever heard him express himself by any figure of speech.

"The suggestion of your Excellency is invaluable," answered Meidias; "I move that the question be proposed to the academy, by which means——"

"That is exactly what I mean," interrupted the archon; "what good is an Academy of Sciences to us, if we are to sit and puzzle our brains about such subtle questions as this?"

"Admirable!" all at once cried half a dozen stout senators, patting their smooth foreheads with their soft hands—"admirable!" The academy shall give us an opinion on the subject."

"One moment, gentlemen," said Hypsiboas, one of the heads of the republic, for he was at the same time nomophylax, first curator of the

holy frogs, and a member of the Council of Ten,—notwithstanding all these offices there was scarcely a man in all Abdera who took less interest in Latona and her frogs than he did. But, because, at the last election of archon, the Jasonian Onacradias had been preferred to him, he had made it a principle, in every possible respect, to be on the contrary side to the new archon. It was consequently attributed to him by the Jasonians and their friends, that he was a turbulent demagogue, and wanted only to make a party in the senate to oppose all acts and motions of the Jasonians, who for some time past had been, in truth, the predominating race.

“I pray you, gentlemen,” said Hysiboas, “do not be in too great a hurry. This matter does not belong to the academy; it belongs to the College of Frog-guardians. It would be contrary to all good order, and an intolerable insult besides to the priesthood of Latona, if a question of this nature and importance were submitted to the academy.”

“It concerns no mere question of frogs, honourable Mr. Nomophylax,” answered Meidias, with his usual sarcastic coolness. “Alas! since the admirable regulations which for some years

past have been observed, it has become a question of state."

"And perhaps the weightiest that has ever rendered necessary a calling together of our country's brightest intellects," interposed Stentor. Stentor possessed the hottest head in the republic, and by means of his thundering voice he could do much in the senate. The Jasonians had brought him, plebeian as he was, on their side by marrying him to a natural daughter of the late arch-priest Agathysus, and from time to time they made good use of his voice, when they wanted to get up an opposition in the senate to the nomophylax Hysiboas, who had a voice quite as strong, though not as thundering. It was well for the Abderite senators on these occasions that the perpetual chorus of croaking, to which they had become accustomed, had made their hearing a little thicker than usual—they would otherwise have run no small risk of having the drums of their ears broken outright. But in the senate-house of Abdera such refinements were common, and both screamers were allowed to roar against each other till hoarseness prevented their roaring any longer. At this moment, however, there was no particular reason for listening to either of them, and accordingly

the archon asked the secretary what o'clock it was; and on receiving the assurance that it was near dinner time, he put the question to the vote at once.

Here, it must be remembered, that a resolution was never carried because the grounds on which it was made appeared to the voters the most satisfactory, but they did for the most part assent to the opinion of those who shouted the loudest and spoke the last, unless, as it frequently happened, the thing were a party question, and then every man voted according to his party.

Now the party of the archon was generally the strongest, but on an occasion like this, which the president of the academy very properly called a most delicate one, Onocradias would with difficulty have carried his point, had it not been for the extraordinary use which Stentor made of his lungs. It was resolved by twenty-eight voices against twenty-two that a report should be requested from the academy, through what means the overwhelming multitude of frogs in and about Abdera, (without prejudice to Latona and the rights of her temple,) might in some degree be restrained. The Senator Meidias had caused this clause to be inserted either to propitiate the nomophylax and his

party, or at least to take away from them all pretext for setting the people against the Government; but the nomophylax and his followers were not people to be led by the nose by means of a clause. They entered a protest against the decision; they demanded an attested copy, and carried it in procession to the high-priest Stilbon. They informed him of the encroachment thus made on the rights of the College of Frog-guardians, and on those of Latona's temple, and proceeded to take counsel with him as to those measures which ought to be adopted in their defence.

CHAPTER IV.

The high-priest Stilbon.—His character and manner of life.—Interview between the priests of Latona and the minority in the senate.—Stilbon looks at the matter from his own point of view, and goes to make his sentiments known to the archon.—Remarkable conversation among those who remained behind.

THE present high-priest, Stilbon, was the third who had held that high office since the decease of the venerable Strobilus (may his ashes rest in peace!). In the character of these men there was one strong point of resemblance, however different they were in almost every other respect : that one was a great zeal for the interests of their order. Stilbon, from his boyhood, had loved solitude ; he would frequently ramble away into the most unfrequented parts of Latona's forests, or sit for hours in the most secret recesses of her temple, wrapt in deep

meditation ; and as to the subjects of his contemplation, the more removed they were from the ordinary business of life, the less intelligible to the ordinary intellects of mankind, the more acceptable they were to our recluse. Like an unwearied spider, he ever sat in the centre of his web of word and thought, busy in spinning out the small store of ideas which he had treasured up in his uneventful life, and within the narrow circle of Latona's temple. And he did spin them into such fine threads, that he might have tapestried with them the innumerable cells of his brain over and over again.

But, besides these metaphysical speculations, he had greatly occupied himself with the antiquities of Greece, Thrace, and especially Abdera; and above all with the histories of those continents, islands, and peninsulas, which, according to ancient tradition, were once there, but were now there no longer. The worthy man knew not one word about what was going on in his own time, and still less of what was going on fifty years ago: indeed, the city of Abdera itself, at the end of which he lived, was less known to him than Memphis or Persepolis. But perhaps he was all the more on this account at home in the old Pelasgian land. He knew what

every nation, every race, every little tribe, was called before it bore its present appellation; could tell by whom was built every temple now lying in ruins; and had at his fingers' ends all the succession of kings from the flood of Deucalion downwards; he could name them as they sat in their little gates and administered justice to all those who were not in a condition to administer it to themselves—the famous island of Atlantis was as well-known to him as though he had seen with his own eyes all its lordly palaces, temples, and theatres; and he would have been inconsolable if any scholar could have pointed out an error in his thick book on the wanderings of the isle of Delos, or in any other of those thick books which he had written on equally interesting subjects. Notwithstanding all this pedantry, Stilbon was really a learned man; but in everything which concerned the real business of life, he was not only extremely simple, but, however little he suspected the truth, one of the most limited of mankind.

His notions on human business were altogether impracticable, because he was never ready with the right word at the right time. He judged always obliquely about that which stood straight before him, came to logical conclusions upon

incorrect premises, marvelled greatly over the most natural events, and was ever expecting favourable results from measures which must infallibly frustrate his intentions. His head was, and remained as long as he lived, the rendezvous of all popular prejudices. The silliest old woman in Abdera was not so credulous as he was, and, however strange it may seem to the reader, he was probably the only man in the whole city who with all his heart believed in the frogs of Latona. In spite of all these defects, Stilbon was universally respected as a right-minded and peace-loving man; and if those negative virtues which arose from his mode of life, kind of study, and position in society, were reckoned to him as merits, why then Stilbon was better than most of his fellow-citizens. These latter imagined him to be a man without passions, because they saw that none of those things which excited the desires of other people had any effect upon him. But they did not reflect that he set no value on those things, either because he did not know them, or because by his habits of solitude and meditation, he had learned to treat them with an utter indifference and disregard.

But all the while the worthy Stilbon *had* one

passion which by itself was quite as calculated to produce disturbance in the State as all those from which he was free—a passion for his own opinions. Thoroughly convinced himself of their correctness, he could not imagine how it was possible that a man with his five senses, and an ordinary portion of human reason, could come to any other conclusions. When, however such an event did force itself on his notice, he only saw two alternatives by which it might be accounted for : one was, that the person in question must be out of his senses ; the other, that he was a wicked, deliberate, and envenomed enemy of the truth, and therefore a man to be despised, abhorred, and avoided. This mode of thinking made Stilbon, with all his virtues, a very dangerous man in Abdera ; and he would have been much more so, were it not that his indolence and his invincible love of seclusion stood a little in the way. As it was, he seldom thought any thing that went on around him worthy of his notice at all.

“ I never heard complaints that we had too many frogs,” said Stilbon, quite coolly, as soon as the nomophylax had finished his representation.

“ That is not the subject of our conversation,

most reverend sir," replied the other; "on that point the senate is pretty well of one mind, and indeed all the people too. But what we have to consider is the propriety of referring to the academy such a question as this, 'By what ways and means can the unreasonable number of frogs be reduced?'"

"And has the senate made such a requisition to the academy?" asked Stilbon.

"Why, yes—did you not hear?" answered Hypsiboas, rather impatiently. "That is the very thing that we have come to tell you."

"In that case the senate has taken a step which does not display its usual wisdom," replied Stilbon, in as calm a tone as before. "Have you brought the decree with you?"

"Here is a copy of it."

"Hem! hem!" said Stilbon, and shook his head, after having carefully perused it two or three times. "Here are almost as many absurdities as words. They must first prove that there *are* too many frogs in Abdera. Now this can never be proved, for, in order to ascertain what is too much, we must first accurately define what is enough, and this would be impossible for us to know, even if the Delphian Apollo, or his mother, Latona herself,

were to vouchsafe us an oracle for the purpose. The thing is clear enough ; for, as the frogs are under the immediate influence and protection of the goddess, it must be impious, as well as unreasonable, to say that there can ever be more of them than agrees with her pleasure. Not only does the matter not require, but it does not admit of any investigation. But in the second place, if it be granted that there *are* too many frogs, yet it is absurd to consult about ways and means to diminish their number ; for *there are no such means*, at least none that stand within our reach, which is just the same as though there were none at all. Thirdly, it is unreasonable to make such a requisition to the academy. For not only has the academy no right to decide upon such weighty and important subjects as this ; but it consists, as I fear, almost entirely of witlings and poetasters, who do not understand such matters as this at all ; and, as a proof that they do not, I am given to understand that they are silly enough to sport and jest about them. I am willing to hope that these poor people have so acted out of ignorance. Let them read with attention my book on the antiquities of Latona's temple, and then they must either be destitute of common sense, or else open

enemies of all that is good, if they do not at once admit the truth which I have there laid down as clearly as if it were written with a sunbeam. This decree of the senate is therefore thoroughly absurd, and can consequently be of no effect, for to say of a thing that it is absurd, is as much as to say that it is not a thing at all. You may just tell honourable members this at their next meeting—'second thoughts are best'—and I am sure they will come to a better decision, and, then, most worshipful Mr. Nomophylax, I think the best thing we can do will be to let the matter rest."

"We all know," answered the nomophylax, "that you are a profoundly-learned man; but do not be offended if I say that about worldly business your reverence understands just nothing at all. The majority in the senate have come to a conclusion which is prejudicial to the rights of the Decemviri. In the mean time the rule that the will of the majority is law will obtain in this as in all other decrees, and the archon will have put it into execution before I could impress your logic upon the members of the next session, even if I were inclined to undertake such a task at all."

"Speculative things, like this," said Stilbon,

"do not depend on the number, but on the wisdom of those who discuss them."

"Admirable, most reverend sir,—admirable! —the wisdom, yes the wisdom is always in the right. But now the question is, how are we to manage so as to secure that right to it? we must devise some effective means to postpone the execution of this decree."

"I will at once," replied Stilbon, "send to his excellency the archon my book on the antiquities of Latona's temple; for in the chapter on the frogs all that can be said on the subject is set in the clearest light."

"The archon," put in one of the deputation, "never read anything in his life except the *Abdera Daily News*. This plan will be of no use, that I will warrant you."

"So much the worse!" rejoined the priest; "what times do we live in if such a statement as this can be true—if the chief magistrate of our city sets such an example! But I can hardly believe that things are so bad as that."

"You are too innocent, my reverend friend," said the nomophylax. "But we may pass over that matter; it would be well for Abdera if that were the worst fault of the archon."

"I see only one means by which the thing

can be done," said one of the priests, Pamphagus by name. "The venerable college of the Decemviri is above the senate; consequently——"

"I beg your pardon!" exclaimed a senator of the deputation, "not above the senate, for——"

"You did not allow me to finish my observation," replied the priest, somewhat irritated. "The Decemviri are not above the senate in matters of justice and state policy; but as all matters in which Latona's temple is concerned must be heard by the Decemviri, and as, from their decision there is no appeal, it follows that ——"

"They are not above the senate," interrupted a third, "for the senate does not concern itself with the affairs of Latona, and cannot therefore come into collision with the Decemviri."

"So much the better for the senate!" said the priest; "but when the senate does take upon itself to decide concerning a matter, which, to say the least, trenches very closely on the rights of Latona's temple, as seems to be the case in the present instance, I see no other solution of the difficulty than the calling together of the Decemviri."

"The archon only can do that," said Hypsi-

boas, "and he naturally will hesitate to take such a step."

"Not if he be required to do so by the College of the Priests."

"I am not of your opinion, my reverend colleague," interrupted Stilbon; "it would be beneath the dignity of the Decemviri, and contrary to precedent, if we were to assemble that body on such ground as the present. It can only be convened when some injury is done to religion; but where is the injury here? The senate has passed an absurd act—that is all. It is bad, but not bad enough. You cannot prove that the Decemviri can censure the senate merely for passing absurd decrees."

The priest Pamphagus bit his lips, and whispered something into the ear of the nomophylax. Stilbon, without heeding this, proceeded:—

"I will at once go to the archon and take him my book on the antiquities of Latona's temple; he shall read the chapter about the frogs. It is impossible that this can fail to show him the absurdity of the decree."

"Go, then, and success go with you," said the nomophylax.

The high-priest went away at once, his thick book under his arm.

"What a head it is!" said the priest Pamphagus as soon as his head was turned.

"He is a very learned man," observed the senator Precephalus, "but——"

"Learned! What do you mean by learned?" asked Pamphagus. "Learned in trifles that no one on earth cares a fig about."

"Your reverence no doubt understands that matter much better than I, for I know nothing about it; but it has always seemed a strange thing to me, that a man with the reputation of so much erudition should be as simple as a child in all matters of business."

"It is unfortunate for Latona's temple," said another of the priests.

"And for all the State," added a third.

"I am not quite so sure of that," replied the nomophylax, with a sarcastic sneer; "we must take what we can get, and be thankful. But it seems to me that you gentlemen are all of one opinion—that the Decemviri must be convened."

"And the more so," observed one of the deputation, "as we are tolerably sure to find there a majority against the archon."

"If we cannot help ourselves in some better way, I must be contented," said Hypsiboas,

"but could we not do better now that we have Latona and her priests on our side? Do not we comprise nearly half of the whole body? We were only beaten by a majority of six, and if we hold fast together——"

"That we will!" cried all the deputation with one voice.

"An idea has struck me, gentlemen," observed the nomophylax, "but until I have matured it a little I will not develope it. Select two or three of your number, and we will talk over the matter this evening more fully at my villa. We shall hear in the mean time what success the high-priest has had with the archon Onocradias."

"I will wager my head against a melon," said Charix, one of the priests, "that he will only make bad worse."

"So much the better," replied the nomophylax.

CHAPTER V.

What passed between the high-priest and the archon.—
One of the most instructive chapters in all this history.

WHILE the conversation recorded in the preceding chapter was being carried on in the residence of the high-priest, this latter had betaken himself to the archon, and craved an audience on a subject most important to the archon himself.

“Oh! then that must certainly be the frogs,” said the senator Meidias, who was with the archon at the time, and had just informed him how the nomophylax, with all his followers, had been seen to go to the temple of Latona.

“I wish all the frogs were——Latona forgive me!” exclaimed the archon; “now this sanctimonious preacher will be filling my ears with whys and wherefores, till at last I shall not know

whether I am standing on my head or my heels. Pray help me against this tiresome old pedant."

Meidias only laughed at the archon's embarrassment. "Hear all that he has to say, but hold fast to your own opinion, and remind him that necessity has no law. We cannot be all eaten up alive by the frogs, and if affairs are to go on as hitherto, the best thing that Latona could do would be to change us all into frogs together. At all events it can do no harm if your excellency gives the priest to understand that Jason also has a temple at Abdera, and that gods are only gods so far as they do good."

"Capital! capital!" said the archon; "I only wish I could put the matter to him just as you have put it to me. But I will soon collect my thoughts. You step into my study there; you will see one or two fine sketches by Parrhasius of some of our ballet-girls—by the bye, you need not say anything about that to my wife."

Meidias went into the study, and the priest was introduced.

"I come to your excellency to give you a good piece of advice, because I have a high opinion of your wisdom, and would willingly save you from inconvenience."

"I thank you, most reverend friend, for both:

good counsel always finds good reception. What is that you offer me?"

"The senate," proceeded Stilbon, "has passed, as I understand, a very rash decree——"

"Reverend sir!——"

"I do not mean to say," continued the priest, "that this has been done knowingly: men err, for the most part, simply for want of knowing. Here I bring your excellency a book from which you may learn all the history and philosophy of our frogs. It has cost me much toil and many sleepless nights. You will see from these pages that the academy, which is a thing of yesterday, can have no right to decide a question which is as old as the divinity of Latona. Frogs in Abdera are quite different things, as we all ought to know, from frogs in any other part of the world. They belong to Latona, and are undying witnesses and living documents of her godhead. It is unreasonable to say that there can be too many of them, and sacrilege to discuss means whereby their number may be diminished."

"Sacrilege, my lord high-priest?"

"I should ill deserve to be a priest at all if I allowed such things as this to pass in silence; for if we once admit that the number of frogs

may be diminished, what is to hinder our less pious posterity from rooting them out altogether? As I have already said, your excellency will find in this book all that is to be believed on the subject. See to it that an abstract be made, and that every family be furnished with a copy of it. If this be done, then the safest thing will be to say no more about the matter at all. As to the academy, the whole realm of Nature lies open before them; they may discuss from elephants to wood-lice, from eagles to mosquitos, from whales to tittlebats—everything, in fact, except—frogs!”

“Reverend sir,” answered the archon, “Heaven preserve me from inquiring into the mysteries of our frogs! I am archon in order to keep everything in Abdera as I found it; but you see we cannot stir for the frogs, and we really must get rid of the inconvenience. We cannot be worse off than we are—that your reverence must see as well as I do. Our forefathers were contented with keeping up the holy pool, and if any one chose to have a frog-trench of his own—why, he was free to do so. All this was reasonable enough, and we should have let well alone; but now that we are in a positive danger of being eaten up alive by the frogs, I beg

your reverence to be so good as to tell us what we are to do, for to me it seems small comfort, if one is devoured by frogs, to know that they are very uncommon frogs that do it. In one word, the academy shall give their opinion, because the senate has demanded it of them; and, with all due respect to your reverence, I will *not* read your book. We will have the matter settled, once for all, whether the people of Abdera are here on account of the frogs, or the frogs on account of the people; for as soon as the republic comes in peril through the frogs, it becomes at once an affair of state, and the priests of Latona have nothing more to do with it, as you know perfectly well. Necessity has no law. In short, reverend sir, we won't be devoured by the frogs. If, however, you should insist on our being so—which I hope you will not—you must then pardon me, if I remind you that the temple of Latona is not the only one in Abdera; and the golden fleece, the guardianship of which is committed to my family by the gods, may, perhaps, after all, be potent enough to assist Abdera out of all her difficulties. I will not say more—only remember, my lord priest, the pitcher goes often to the water, but gets broken at last."

The worthy Stilbon could hardly tell whether

he were sleeping or waking when he heard the archon, whom he had always regarded as a very well-meaning and exemplary governor, express himself in a speech so objectionable. He stood for a while with his mouth open, in perfect silence, not because he had nothing to say—far from it—but because he had so much to say that he really did not know where to begin.

“I could never have believed it possible,” at last he began, “that I should live to see the day when a high-priest of Latona could hear such words from an archon of Abdera as I have just listened to!”

The archon, at these words, began to feel a little uneasy, for, as he did not rightly know what it was that he had said, he was rather apprehensive that he might have said more than he intended—more, in fact, than was quite seemly. He looked with a perplexed eye towards the study-door, as though he would gladly have called Meidias out to help him; as, however, there was an absolute necessity that in this case he should help himself, he rubbed his forehead, blew his nose, twitched his beard, fidgeted, and at last answered the priest with the best words he could put together in his agitation,—“I really do not know how to

understand what you have just said ; you must have entirely misunderstood me. You are a very learned man, and I have all possible respect for you and your office——”

“Then will you read my book ?” interrupted Stilbon.

“Why, no, not exactly ; but if you think that it is absolutely necessary——”

“I press that which is good upon nobody,” replied the priest at last, with more warmth than he was perhaps aware of ; “I will leave it with you—read it or not. The worse will it be for you if it be a matter of indifference whether you judge rightly or wrongly.”

“My lord priest,” rejoined the archon, who was beginning to get a little warm too, “you are not without a temper, I see. I can easily understand that you have the frogs very much at heart, for it is on their account that you are high-priest ; but you must at the same time remember that I am archon over Abdera, and not over a frog-marsh. In your temple rule as you like, but let us rule in the senate as seems best to us. The academy shall send in their report, that I give you my word upon ; but I also assure you that before the senate takes any active steps in consequence, the report shall be laid before you.”

The high-priest concealed his dissatisfaction at the result of his unsuccessful visit as well as he could, made his bow, and retired. The archon had assured him that the rights of Latona's temple were as sacred in his eyes as those of the senate and the aristocracy of Abdera, and with this assurance he was obliged to be content. It was something that he parted on polite terms at least.

"There! that has put me rather in a heat," said the archon to the senator Meidias, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"You have behaved yourself most resolutely," said the senator. "The priest will be as mischievous as he can, only he is fighting with a wooden sword. You have only to refuse all attention to his distinctions and syllogisms, and he is beaten at once, and does not know where he is."

"Yes, unless he has the nomophylax behind his back. I wish I had not compromised myself quite so far. But what a proposition that I should read the thick book that the erudite old dotard has more than half blinded himself with writing!—who could listen patiently to such a notion?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that or any-

thing else. We have the academy with us, and in a few days all the laughers in Abdera will be on our side. I will scatter songs and poems among the people; Silex, the ballad-maker, shall weave the Lycian frog-peasants into a rhyme which shall split the sides of the people with laughter. We must make those gentlemen ridiculous with their frogs;—it must be neatly done, but we must have stroke upon stroke, ballad on ballad, and you will soon see how my remedy will act.”

“I heartily wish it,” said the archon. “You can hardly understand what mischief these wretched frogs have done this summer in my garden—I can no longer put up with the annoyance. We only want now a dry year, and then we shall have an army of field-mice and moles for our further comfort.”

“First let us get rid of the frogs; as to the mice and moles, it will be time enough to take measures about them when they are really come.”

“But what the plague,” said the archon, “am I to do with his thick book?—surely *you* would not advise me to read it.”

“Jason and Medea forbid! Let your Excellency give it to me, and I will take it to my

cousin Korax, who will no doubt draw up the resolution of the academy. He will make good use of it, I'll be bound for that."

"There may be a great deal of good matter in it," said the archon.

"If it be good for nothing else," answered the senator, "we will make it into powder, and give it to the rats which, as your Excellency says, are coming. I dare say it will make excellent rat-bane."

CHAPTER VI.

What the high-priest Stilbon did when he reached home.

THE first thing that the high-priest did, on arriving at his cell, was to sit down before his work on the antiquities of Latona's temple, with the intention of reperusing with great care the chapter on the frogs, which was the longest in the book, and certainly, as at least he flattered himself, the best; and this he intended to do with all the impartiality of a judge who had no other interest in the thing than the discovery of truth. For, however confident he was of the result of his examination, he yet held it reasonable and necessary that he should again go over his whole system and arguments, so as to prove them once more from point to point, that, after this new, accurate, and sharp inquiry, he might

the better be able to defend his theory against the mistaken views and fashionable philosophy of his time.

Poor Stilbon! If thou wert, as I would rather believe than not, an honest man, what a deceitful thing had thy reason become! and what a slippery misleading serpent is that great enchantress, self-love!

Stilbon read through his chapter on the frogs with all the impartiality of which he was capable; proved every fact, every evidence, every syllogism, with the cool deliberation of an Arce-silaus; and concluded that men must either lay aside all pretension to common sense, or admit the truth of his system. "You say that cannot possibly be; pardon me, it can very possibly be, for it has happened, and still happens almost every day."

Nothing was more natural. The good man loved his system as well as his own flesh and blood. He had generated it himself—it was both wife and child to him, and far dearer than all those worldly luxuries, honours, and joys, which he by his entrance into Latona's temple had renounced for ever. In truth, it was to him beyond all other enjoyments.

As he seated himself to prove once more the

accuracy of his system, he was equally convinced of its truth and beauty as he was of his own existence. It came just as naturally to him as if he had been examining, with all the composure in the world, whether the snow on the summit of Hæmus was white or black.

"That the Milesian peasants who forbade the thirsty Latona to drink from their pool, were changed into frogs, is a fact," said he; "that a number of these frogs, as tradition has described, were removed and placed in the pond situated in the grove of Latona in Abdera, is a fact also. Both facts are grounded on that whereon all historical truth is grounded, human belief in human testimony; and as long as Abdera has existed no reasonable man has ever dared to call in question the universal belief of the Abderites in these facts, because he who should deny them would be obliged to prove their impossibility; and what man living can do that? But whether the frogs which at the present time are found in the sacred ponds are precisely the same as those which, having been men, Latona, or, what is the same thing, Jupiter at Latona's request, had changed into frogs,—on this point there are several opinions. Our learned men have most of them maintained that the support of the

sacred ponds is a mere institution of our ancestors, who had decreed that frogs should be kept therein, as a remembrance, or as a symbol of the power, of our tutelary goddess. The common people have always believed in the frogs, and spoken of them as if they were the identical ones produced by the well-known miracle. And I, Stilbon, by the grace of Jupiter and Latona high-priest of Abdera, have, after mature consideration, concluded that this belief of the people is supported by irrefragable evidence; and here is my demonstration."

The condescending reader would find himself probably but poorly edified were we to give him the detailed argument as propounded in the aforesaid book of the high-priest Stilbon, especially as we are all as fully persuaded of its groundlessness as the honest Stilbon was of its truth. We shall therefore content ourselves with remarking that the whole system hinged upon an hypothesis common enough now, but, then, and at Abdera, new, and which Stilbon believed he had originated himself, viz. that all-generation consisted in the development of original germs.

Stilbon found this discovery so glorious, and supported it on so many moral and logical

grounds (physical research was not his forte), that day by day it appeared to him more unanswerable. At length he believed that he had brought it to the highest point of probability. Now, as from this to certainty is only one point, what wonder was it that an hypothesis so reasonable, so subtle, so probable, and which, moreover, he had originated himself, worked out with so much labour, and brought into a close and necessary connection with all his other ideas, and then had made the basis of a new and philosophical theory on the frogs of Latona, should at last appear to him as certain, obvious, and irrefutable, as any proposition in Euclid?

"When the Milesian peasants were changed," said Stilbon, "they contained within themselves the germs of all peasants or non-peasants who might have proceeded from them to this day, or even to the end of time, in the ordinary course of nature. Now, at the moment when the aforesaid Milesian peasants became frogs, these germs must have been changed from human germs into frog-germs; for," said he, "either these germs must have been annihilated, or they must have remained as they were, or they must have *ranified*, or, in other words, frog-i-fied. The first supposition is untenable, for it is as impossible for

nothing to proceed from something as for anything to proceed out of nothing; the second hypothesis is equally unsound, for in that case the Milesian *ἀνθρωποβάτραχοι*, or men-frogs, have been continually the parents of real men, which is not only contrary to the facts of history, but is in all ways unreasonable. There remains, therefore, only the third doctrine, that these germs were ranified, that is, changed into frog-germs; and we may, therefore, with perfect accuracy state, that the frogs which at that time were found in the holy pool, and all those whose descent can be fairly traced to these, and consequently the frogs in Abdera now in question, are certainly the same as those metamorphosed by Latona, inasmuch as they existed in their germs in the miraculously-changed peasants, and, by one and the same act of divine power, were changed with them."

Taking these principles, then, as proved, the consequences which followed from them were as clear as daylight. "Just as an oak struck by lightning," said Stilbon, "is regarded as a sacred thing, and henceforth belonging and consecrated to Jove the Thunderer, and is looked upon with shuddering awe, so ought we to contemplate the frogs which have been so changed from men

by Jupiter or Latona, even to the thousandth or ten-thousandth descent—to consider them as a race apart, standing between frogs and men as a wonderful creation of Latona, and as such to be treated and honoured. Outwardly, indeed, they are frogs just as others, and yet they are not so, for by birth and nature they were men, and all that birth and nature gives must be of an indelible character. Hence they are not so much to be looked on as frogs as to be regarded in the light of frog-men, and, in a certain sense, of our own species—our brethren, but our unhappy brethren, marked, as a warning to us, with the unmistakable stamp of the divine wrath, and therefore deserving of our tenderest pity.” Nor did he stop here: “Not only is our pity due to them, but our reverence also, for they are enduring and undeniable evidences of the power of our goddess,—evidences which no man may attack without attacking the goddess herself; for their preservation through so many centuries is a proof that she has willed that they should be preserved.”

The good high-priest, a man whom our readers may perhaps look upon as wholly contemptible, but who would not so appear to them if they could place themselves in his exact position, had

spent the whole evening in reading over and over his chapter on the frogs, reflecting seriously upon it, and endeavouring to strengthen his system on the firmest ground. So deeply had he meditated that his senses were perfectly bewildered, and he had entirely forgotten that the nomophylax had requested information of his reception by the archon, and that he had promised to give it; nor did it at all occur to his mind till in the twilight he heard his cell-door open, and the nomophylax, in his own person, stood before him.

"I have nothing very consoling to repeat to you," said Stilbon. "We are even in worse hands than I had foreseen. The archon refused to read my book, perhaps because he cannot read at all."

"I would not be too sure of that," replied Hypsiboas.

"And he spoke in such a tone as could never have been expected from the head of the republic."

"And what did he say?"

"I thank Heaven that I have forgotten the greater part of what he did say. He maintained that the academy must give its opinion——"

"That we must agree to," struck in the

nomophylax, "and the Anti-froggites will perhaps find more opposition than they look for. But lest they should accuse us of going to work violently before we had tried milder means, the minority is resolved to make without delay a written representation to the senate, in case Latona's clergy are disposed to make common cause with us."

"Willingly," said Stilbon; "I will at once draw up the document myself. I will also——"

"In the first place," replied the nomophylax, "a short memorial which I have already, *sub spe rati et grati*, sketched out, will be sufficient. We must reserve so learned a pen as yours for the last resource."

The high-priest allowed his plans to be overruled, but nevertheless thought he would get something done previously; so he set himself to compose during the night a small tractate, wherein he placed his system of the frogs in an entirely new light, and in a much more elegant manner than it appeared in his book on the antiquities of Latona's temple, and refuted, as he went on, all objections which the philosopher Korax might possibly raise. "Foreseen arrows are so much the less hurtful," said he to himself. "I will make the argument so intelligible

that it shall be plain to the meanest capacity. It must indeed be a sad day for all that is good and right, if truth has lost her power over the human understanding exactly in this particular case."

CHAPTER VII.

Extracts from the opinion of the academy.—A word concerning the intentions of Korax thereupon, with an apology in which Stilbon and Korax may equally share.

DURING the progress of all these movements on the part of the minority of the senate and Latona's priests, the academy had received an order to lay before the senate, within the space of seven days, an opinion as to what reasonable means could be adopted (saving the rights of Latona) to diminish the enormous and increasing number of frogs.

The academy did not fail to assemble on the following morning, and as the Anti-froggites formed a considerable majority, it was unanimously resolved that the "opinion" should be drawn up by Korax, a special caution being given him by the president, not by any objec-

tionable treatment of the subject to involve the academy in a dispute with the priests of Latona.

Korax promised to exercise all his wisdom so as to express the truth in the most inoffensive manner possible; "but to the impossible," he continued, "as the honourable gentlemen knew, no one could be bound."

"Quite right," replied the president; "my suggestion merely went as far as possibility."

"That is what I always say," reiterated Korax.

"Into what a paradoxical position is an honourable man thrown, if he has the misfortune of being an Abderite!" said Korax to himself, while preparing to place on paper the opinion required. "In what other city on earth would such a question have been intruded upon an academy of sciences? But it is well that the senate has so much understanding as to ask the academy at all; there are States where even so much wisdom as this would not be found, and we must confess that the Abderites sometimes, in their marvellous simplicity, hit upon a good expedient."

Korax sat at his writing-desk, and worked with so much zeal that he was prepared before sunset with the opinion.

As we have given a sufficiently detailed account of the system which the high-priest Stilbon had constructed, that impartiality which it is the first duty of an historian to practise requires of us, that we should give at least as much of the academical opinion as may be necessary for the complete understanding of this remarkable history.

"The high senate," said the preface to the opinion, "in its honourable decree directed to the academy lays before that body the representation, that the frog-population in Abdera exceeds the human population in an enormous and immeasurable proportion, and thereby spares the academy the unpleasant task of proving what, as a universally-known fact, lies before the eyes of every observer. It therefore claims the consideration of the academy, while it endeavours, under these circumstances, to devise a remedy whereby this disorder and nuisance may be removed or alleviated.

"But the frogs in Abdera, as a very long established institution connected with the faith of our forefathers, have acquired rights, to disturb them in which would seem to many dangerous, and to some absolutely criminal. Since, then, by the nature of the case, the only available means

which might be suggested by the academy for the advantage of the commonwealth, would seem like an open attack on the Abderite religion, by assailing the real or pretended rights of the Abderite frogs, it will be serviceable, and indeed indispensable, to lay before the senate an examination into the actual condition of the aforesaid frogs.

"The academy begs also the close attention of the right honourable members of the senate to this theoretical portion of its most respectful and submissive opinion, as the happy result of a discussion so deeply interesting to the whole community depends mainly on the correct views taken of the preliminary question, whether, and how far, the frogs of Abdera are to be considered in the light of mere frogs, or otherwise."

This examination occupied more than two-thirds of the whole opinion.

The sly philosopher, mindful of what he had promised to the far-sighted president, related the transformation of the Milesian peasants only by the way, and with all that respect which is due to an old popular tradition. He considered it, with reference to the book of the high-priest on the antiquities of Latona's temple, as a thing no more to be doubted than the transformation

of a Narcissus into a flower, or a Cygnus into a swan, or a Daphne into a laurel, or any other transformation which rests on such strong ground; for if it were not inadmissible or unbecoming to doubt such venerable legends, it was at least unwise. On one side it was impossible to invalidate its authenticity, through historical testimony, and on the other no naturalist in the world was in a position to prove its absolute impossibility; and thus every wise man would the more willingly abstain from expressing a doubt, inasmuch as there was nothing more to say against it than the common-place observations, "It is incredible," "It is against the course of nature," and similar phrases which would occur to the shallowest minds. He looked upon the transformation of the Milesian peasant into a frog as a matter resting on its own evidence, but asserted that its truth or falsehood had really nothing to do with the question of the senate. There was probably no one who would deny that this Milesian frog-man had been dead and out of the way for at least two thousand years; and even if it were allowed that the Abderite frogs traced their descent from the same, this only proved that, from time immemorial, from father to son, they had been

true and genuine frogs; for, from the time that the Milesian peasants had been frogfied they had ceased to be men, and consequently from that moment forward could have had no power to continue any other race than that which was now become their own, *i. e.* true and genuine frogs. In a word, frogs were frogs; and the circumstance that their early primogeniture had been transmuted from Milesian peasants militated just as little against their present froggish nature as the fact that a beggar whose ancestors for two-and-thirty descents had been born beggars could ultimately trace his lineage to Ninus or Semiramis, would entitle him to claim the station and respect due to a prince. The supporters of the contrary opinion seemed to be so far convinced of this truth themselves, that they grounded their views of the higher nature of the Abderite frogs on a theory which needed no other refutation than to be fairly expressed.

The penetrating reader—and it is understood that a work like this can have no other—will immediately, without our reminding him, have remarked that Korax, by this introduction, came upon the system of the high-priest Stilbon concerning the occult germs, and which it was necessary for him, before he could venture on

any explanation of his plan for reducing the number of frogs, to succeed in either refuting or rendering contemptible. Now, as of these two methods the last was at the same time the most convenient, and most suitable to the capacities of the high and wise dignitaries with whom he had to do, Korax satisfied himself, through a comical account of the indefinite littleness of pretended germs, to show the unreasonable character of the hypothesis.

"We will," said he, "not to fatigue the attention of the senate with unnecessary calculations, assume that the son of the biggest and fattest of the frog-changed peasants had, in this imaginary germ-state, the relation in point of magnitude to his father, of one to ten millions. We will assume this for the sake of round numbers, although it might be proved, without much trouble, that the germ would be at least ten times smaller than I have supposed. Now there must be in this germ, according to the priest Stilbon's view of the case, the germ of the next descendant, and in this that of the following, and so on to the ten-thousandth; and in each case the germ must be ten million times smaller than in the foregoing. Let us now suppose that we have only the thirtieth generation of

frogs, and we shall see that the germ of such a one, at the time of the change of his ancestor, must have been so many million times smaller than a cheese-mite; that, if the right honourable senate of Abdera would set the quickest writer they could find to set down the sum which would express this proportion, he would not have finished his task in less than two hundred years, and the whole realm of this excellent republic would scarcely find room for the paper which should contain the calculation. The academy leaves to the consideration of the senate whether the minutest of all minute animals be minute enough to give any idea of the unspeakable littleness of the germ, and whether it is not possible that some human and pardonable infirmity on the part of the most reverend high-priest may have clouded for a time his intellect when he invented the before-named hypothesis, an hypothesis which, after all, gives but a feeble support to the sacredness of the Abderite frogs.

“The academy has used its best endeavours not to tax too greatly the imagination of the senate. But when we come to consider how short the natural life of a frog is, and that the present generation must be at least the fifteen-hundreth from that into which the Milesian pea-

sants were changed, it will be evident that the theory of the most reverend high-priest must before now be lost in an abyss of littleness such as is really frightful to contemplate. 'Nature is,' as the celebrated inscription at Lais declares, 'all that is, all that has been, and all that shall be; and no mortal has hitherto lifted up her veil.' The academy, deeply impressed with the importance of this great truth, is far from desirous of making any unwarrantable inquiry into mysteries which must and will remain ever inexplicable. We consider that it would be in vain to attempt to learn more of the mode of existence of organized beings than the external senses reveal to an attentive observer; and if we hold it allowable for the natural curiosity of the human mind to support by hypotheses its desire of comprehending all things, we do at the same time consider those the most laudable which hold that by the hidden powers of Nature the germs of organized bodies are developed exactly when Nature herself has most need of them. According to this mode of explanation the germ of each now living and croaking creature, in all the marshes and frog-ditches in Abdera, is no older than the period of its immediate generation, and it has no other connection

with those who lived and croaked at the time of the Trojan war, from whom it has nevertheless descended in a right line, than that it is the production of the same Nature, brought forth in the same way, endued with the same qualities, and created with the same intention."

The philosopher Korax, after these copious elucidations, came at last to the following conclusions:—That the Abderite frogs were just as true, natural, and genuine frogs, as any other in the world; and that the peculiar privileges which they enjoyed in that city did not depend upon any peculiarity in their nature, or on any effect produced by the change of men into frogs, but only on a popular belief which, to the great detriment of the republic, had been too long allowed to remain unexamined. Favoured by this notion, the imagination of some persons, and the self-seeking of others, had made out of these frogs a kind of nuisance, the like of which, out of Egypt, the whole world could not exhibit.

"The antiquities of Abdera," he proceeded, "lie, notwithstanding all the light which the venerable and learned Stilbon has so abundantly shed over them, like the antiquities of all other cities in the world,—in that mist of impenetrability which leaves the curious inquirer about

their truth without any hope of ever seeing his desire satisfied.

"But what need have we to know more than we know already? What to us is the origin of Latona's temple and its holy frog-ponds? and what if we knew its whole history? Would Latona be more or less a goddess, her temple more or less a temple, and her frog-ponds more or less frog-ponds?

"Latona must and shall be worshipped in her very ancient temple, and her frogs must and shall be kept up in their holy ponds with due reverence. Both these things were instituted by our earliest forefathers; both are honourable for their antiquity, both are strengthened by the custom of many centuries, sanctified by the laws of our republic, which has confided the care of them to colleges duly instituted for that purpose.

"But if Latona, or Jupiter for the sake of Latona, did change the Milesian peasants into frogs, does it follow that all the frogs of Latona are sacred and entitled to all the sacerdotal privileges of personal inviolability? And if our wise ancestors thought it well to hand down these wonders to perpetual remembrance by maintaining a small frog-pond within the circum-

ference of Latona's temple, does it therefore follow that all Abdera must be changed into a frog-pool? The academy well knows the esteem in which certain opinions and feelings among the people are to be held; but the superstitions in which they are fond of indulging cannot be respected when overstepping reasonable boundaries. Frogs may be held in honour, but to sacrifice men to frogs is unreasonable. The design with which the Abderites our forefathers established the sacred trenches, would be accomplished by the retention of a single frog, though, even if a whole pondful were preserved in one place, still, by the curtailment of their numbers elsewhere, Abdera would not be the less flourishing, powerful, or happy.

"But the singular proposition, that we cannot have too many frogs and frog-moats, has brought us to such a condition that now no other choice remains to us, but either to disburden ourselves immediately of the over-load, or to repair bare-headed and bare-footed to Latona's temple, and with earnest entreaties remain near the shrine of the goddess till she repeats her ancient miracle, and changes us, as many as remain of us, into frogs too.

"The academy most reverentially submits

to the wisdom and patriotism of the right honourable senate, that it would be casting a reflection upon their statesmanship, could the academy doubt for a moment that the means of relieving the people from their present evils will be immediately adopted; this means has all the conditions required by the senate, it goes direct to the point, is immediate in its operation, is not attended with any expense, but will be rather an economy, and neither Latona nor her clergy will have any right to resent it."

And now let the friendly reader guess what this might be: it was, without dwelling long upon conjecture, the most simple in the world. It has always been adopted without any objection in France, and indeed throughout Christendom; but yet, when proposed in Abdera, the hair of half the senators stood on end. In one word, the means proposed to the Abderites in order to release themselves from the supernumerary frogs, was—to eat them!

The proposer of this measure affirmed that on his journey to Athens and Megara, in Corinth, in Arcadia, and a hundred other places, he found that the legs of frogs were commonly eaten, and that he had actually eaten them

himself. He protested that they were wholesome, nutritious, and pleasant food, whether eaten baked, salted, or boiled, fricasseed, or brought to table in small patties.

He calculated that by this means the frog population in a short time would be reduced to very moderate dimensions, and the labouring and middle classes would find in their times of famine no small relief from this new kind of eatable; and, although the number would thus from day to day be diminished, their departure would be compensated in the destruction of a thousand frog-moats turned to other and more productive purposes, by which the said ground, forming at least a fourth part of Abdera, would be properly cultivated, to the great advantage of the inhabitants.

The academy, he added, had viewed the affair from all possible points, and could not perceive how, on the part of Latona and her priests, any objection could arise. So far as the goddess herself was concerned, she must feel much injured through the bare suspicion that the frogs were to her more agreeable than the well-being of the Abderites themselves. From the priests it was to be expected that they were far too good citizens and patriots to reject

a proposal so well calculated to remove one of the greatest evils of Abdera by turning a matter of great inconvenience into one of great utility. But it was only reasonable that they, through their good feelings towards the republic, should not be themselves injured; the academy therefore proposed not only that the inviolableness of the ancient frog-trenches of the temple should be guaranteed, but that, from the moment the legs of frogs should be recognized as lawful food, a tax of two or three oboli on every quart of them should be paid to Latona's temple,—a levy which, at a moderate calculation, would in a short time produce from thirty to forty thousand drachmas, to the great advantage of the temple, which would in every respect be held free from injury.

At length the philosopher Korax concluded his "opinion" with the following remarkable words:—"The academy believes that, through the proposal of this plan, so imperatively called for and yet so generally useful, it has accomplished the task imposed on it; it is at ease with regard to the result, inasmuch as it is only so far concerned in it as the rest of the people of Abdera. But as it is convinced that the frog-worshippers may set themselves in opposi-

tion to the fulfilment of this plan, so it ventures to express a hope that the fathers of the republic will not allow so ridiculous a sect to gain the upper hand, and, before the eyes of the Greeks and barbarians, stain the name of the Abderite republic with a disgrace which no lapse of time will ever be able to efface."

The writer of this work confesses that, in the present state of European opinion about frogs, we are hardly qualified to give an impartial judgment. As to Korax, whatever may be said about his morality, it is quite certain that his passions were as much concerned in the controversy as those of Stilbon; and he was a great deal too anxious to increase the number of his followers to escape the suspicion that the vanity of becoming the head of a party had, at all events, as much to do with his zeal as the love of truth. Perhaps, also, the desire of obtaining a victory over Stilbon, and of securing a distinguished place in the annals of the republic, was not without influence in the mind of the philosopher. But that all his proceedings were dictated by mere greediness, we hold to be a calumny of idle, self-interested, and ill-conditioned people, of whom, in such circumstances, and especially in small republics, there is never any lack.

Korax had taken measures that his opinion should be unanimously approved at the second meeting of the academy, for the president and two or three honorary members, who were not quite prepared to agree with him, had actually taken a journey out of the country.

CHAPTER VIII.

The opinion is read in the senate, and after several weighty debates, it is resolved that it be communicated to the clergy of the temple of Latona.

THE opinion was within the prescribed time handed to the archon, and at the next sitting of the senate was read, *ore rotundo*, by the town-clerk Pyrops, a declared opponent of the frog theory, and with unusual attention to all his stops.

The minority had nevertheless made great interest with the academy to delay the execution of the plan, and in an extraordinary session had secured a majority in questioning whether the recommendation of the academy ought to be carried out without the sanction of the college of the Ten.

Onocradias had also taken time to consider this proposition, but, notwithstanding the daily

solicitations of the opposite party, he had hitherto deferred to reply, as he knew that the opinion would be ready for the next ordinary day of sitting. The nomophylax Hypsiboas, and his party, also found themselves not a little offended when, after the usual business was finished, the archon drew out a great roll from under his mantle, and informed the senate that this was the opinion of the academy, which, in consequence of a decree passed at the last meeting of the senate, they had been commanded to furnish with respect to the troublesome affair of the frogs.

They all rose impetuously at once, accused the archon of having gone cunningly to work, and declared that they would not consent to the reading of the opinion.

Onocradias, who, amongst other little failings, was always warm when he should be cool, and cool when he should be warm, had intended to give a very vehement answer, if the counsellor Meidias had not entreated him to be quiet till the gentlemen had left off. "When this is all done," he whispered, "they will have nothing more to say, and then they must cease"—which was exactly what took place.

The gentlemen quarrelled, bullied, and gesti-

culated, until they were tired, but at last, observing that no one attended to them, they sat down again, growling, wiped the perspiration from their foreheads, and the opinion was read. We know the temper of the Abderites, turning so quickly from tragedy to comedy, and losing sight of the gravest side of a question on the smallest occasion for laughter. Scarcely was a third part of the opinion read when their gay humour displayed itself.

"That I call proof," said one of the senators to his neighbour as Pyrops ceased reading for a moment to take a pinch of snuff.

"We must confess," said another, "that the thing is written in a masterly style."

"I should like to see," said a third, "what could be said against the argument that frogs are in fact only frogs."

"I have long remarked as much," observed a fourth, with a sly wink, "but it is very agreeable to have the opinion of learned men coincide with our own."

"Proceed, Mr. Town-clerk," said Meidias, "for the end must surely soon come."

Pyrops continued to read aloud. The senators laughed till their sides ached over the calcula-

tion of the smallest of germs of the priest Stibon; but they became serious once more when the sorrowful alternative was proposed, and thought what a pity it would be if they all in company, with the reigning archon at their head, should approach Latona's temple and devoutly pray as a special favour to be changed into frogs.

They thought of the thick necks, and gasped for breath at the bare idea as to how such a catastrophe should be met, and from the bottom of their hearts were willing to decide that any expedient must be good by which such a misfortune could be avoided. But as the secret came fairly out,—when they heard that the academy had no other means to propose than that the frogs, which but a moment before they would have been but too glad to be rid of at any price—should be eaten, what tongue can express the mixture of astonishment, vexation, terror, and disappointed expectation, which displayed itself in the countenances of the old counsellors, who made up at least one-half of the body!

At once, being overcome by the invincible power of prejudice, they all rose in terror, declaring that they wished to hear nothing

further, and that they could not have expected such ungodliness in the academy.

"But you hear that we are only to eat common, natural frogs," exclaimed the counsellor Meidias; "do we not eat pea-fowls, pigeons, and geese, notwithstanding that they are sacred to Juno, Venus, and other divinities? Do we believe that beef is any the worse because the nymph Io was changed into a cow, or have the smallest hesitation in eating all kinds of fish, though they are under the protection of all the water-gods?"

"But the matter before us concerns neither geese nor fish, but frogs," roared out the counsellors and guildmasters all at the same moment, "which is quite another thing. Just gods! eat the frogs of Latona!—how could such an idea occur to any man of sound mind?"

"But you take the matter in a wrong light," shouted the counsellor Stentor; "would you like to be taken for frog-worshippers?"

"Better frog-worshippers than frog-eaters," replied the nomophylax, who could not resist the temptation at this lucky moment to place himself at the head of party on whose shoulders he thought it just possible that he might be lifted to the archonship.

"Better anything in the world than frog-eaters!" screamed the minority, echoed by a few grey-bearded guildmasters, whom they had added to their adherents.

"Gentlemen," said the archon Onocradias, rising with some warmth from his ivory chair, as the frog-worshippers shouted so loudly around him that he began to entertain fears for his hearing,—“gentlemen, an opinion of the academy is not a decree of the State. Do sit still, and hear reason, if you can. I hope there is no one here who imagines that I particularly care about eating frogs, but yet I see no reason why I should allow them to eat me. The academy, which is composed of the most learned men in Abdera, must certainly know what they mean when ——”

"Not always," murmured Meidias, under his breath.

"And as it concerns the common welfare, and it is not reasonable that frogs should—that is, that men should be sacrificed to frogs, as the academy has very well expressed it—so it is my opinion that the ‘opinion’ should be communicated without further delay to the most reverend priesthood of Latona. If any among you can point out a better mode of proceeding,

I will be the first to support it. For my part, I have nothing to say against the frogs, except that they are mischievous to the State."

As the proposal of the archon was just what both parties must at last accede to, the communication of the "opinion" was unanimously agreed upon; but, alas! quietness was not restored in the senate, and from that hour forward the poor State of Abdera found its citizens divided, only under another name, once more into Asses and Shadows.

CHAPTER IX.

The high-priest Stilbon writes a very thick book against the academy.—Nobody reads the same, and, for a while, everything remains *in statu quo*.

EVERYBODY expected that the high-priest would pour out the vials of his wrath upon the academy and its judgment—fire and flame was the least they looked for—and it certainly did call forth a good deal of astonishment that, according to appearances, he treated the whole matter as though there had never been any controversy at all.

“What poor heads!” said he, shaking his own, whilst he hastily read over the resolution; “nevertheless, I should think they must have read my book on the antiquities, in which all is so clearly laid down. It is incomprehensible how any one with fine sound sense can be so stupid, but I will thoroughly open their under-

standings; I will write another book—a book that all the academies in the world may condemn if they can.”

And the high-priest sat down and wrote a book three times as thick as the first, which the archon Onocradias had refused to read; and he proved therein that the author of the “opinion” had not even common sense; that he was an ignoramus who had never learned that nothing was great and nothing was small in Nature; that matter itself was infinitely divisible; and that an endless diminution of the germ, even were it carried ten times further than Korax, in his laughably exaggerated calculation, had exhibited it, really proved nothing at all against its possibility. He supported the foundation of his system of the Abderitan frogs by new reasons, and answered with great accuracy and profuseness all possible objections made against it. His imagination and his anger became inflamed as he wrote, and unconsciously he gave vent to bitter sarcasms against his opponents, accused them of intentional misrepresentations and deep-rooted hatred of the truth, and gave them distinctly enough to understand that such men in a well-regulated city were not to be endured.

The senate of Abdera was terrified when the

archon, after some months (before which time Stilbon, although he wrote day and night, had not completed his book), brought the refutation of the high-priest before the council; it was so voluminous that it required two of the strongest porters in the city to carry it in a wheelbarrow to the great council table whereon it was laid. The honourable gentlemen soon decided that there was no possibility of reading so very circumstantial a detail.

It was consequently, by a great majority of votes, agreed to send the work immediately to the philosopher Korax, with a commission that what could be found to object to in the book he should put in writing and report thereon, as soon as possible, to the reigning archon.

Korax stood amongst a crowd of conceited Abderitan youths in the hall of his house, as the porters with their learned burden arrived; when he heard from the council messengers what was to be done, so boisterous a shout of laughter resounded throughout the assembly that it was actually heard in the senate, some three or four streets distant.

"The priest Stilbon is a sly genius," said Korax. "He has seized the most infallible expedient not to be overcome; but he will find himself

mistaken. We will show him how to refute a book without reading it."

"Where shall we unload?" asked the porters, who had already been waiting a long time with their barrow, and understood nothing of all the facetious observations made by the learned gentleman.

"Oh!" replied Korax, "there is no room for so large a book in my small house."

"I will tell you what," said one of the young philosophers. "The book is not written to be read; let it be deposited in the council library. There it will be safe, and remain covered with dust an inch thick, unread and in good condition, to the remotest ages."

"A capital idea!" said Korax. "Good friends," he continued, approaching the porters, "here are two drachmas for your trouble: take your load to the senate library, and trouble yourselves no further about the matter,—I take the whole affair on my own responsibility."

Stilbon, from whom the destiny of a book which had cost him so much trouble could not long be concealed, hardly knew, between anger and astonishment, what to think or to do. "Great Latona!" he exclaimed, time after time, "what an age do we live in! What is

to be done with people who will not hear or read? However, so let it be: I have done my duty. I shall waste no more pens; I shall not stretch out my fingers for so ungrateful a community, and so unintellectual a people."

So thought he in his first moment of dejection, but the good priest deceived himself in this apparent tranquillity. His self-love was too deeply wounded long to remain quiet. The more he reflected on the subject, and he thought of nothing else during the whole succeeding night, the more he felt convinced that he ought not to sit silently down and remain inactive in so good a cause.

The nomophylax, and the other enemies of the archon Onocradias, failed not further to inflame his zeal by their suggestions. They held almost daily meetings to confer on the best way of proceeding, and what steps they should take to stem, as Stilbon called it, the spreading stream of confusion and profligacy. But the times had really and greatly changed. Stilbon was no Strobylus, the people knew but little of him, and he had none of those gifts whereby his predecessor, with infinitely inferior learning, had made himself so important in Abdera.

Almost all the young people of both sexes were infected with the maxims of the philosopher Korax. The greater part of the counsellors and illustrious citizens lent themselves, without seeking any better reason, to the side which furnished them with the best subjects for laughter, and even among the lowest classes the street-ballads which the adherents of Versifex and Korax chaunted everywhere about the streets, had so good an effect, that there could be no hope of raising the people to an insurrection on account of the frogs.

But, what was worst of all, there was reason to believe that even among the priests there were first one, then another, who secretly stood in connection with the Anti-froggites.

It was, indeed, more than mere suspicion that the priest Pamphagus was only waiting an opportunity to make the present state of affairs useful to his own advancement, and to remove the honourable Stilbon from a place which he, as Pamphagus gave people secretly to understand, from his entire inexperience in business, was altogether unequal to fill. Notwithstanding all this, the Froggites formed a considerable party, and Hypsiboas had skill enough always to keep them in a state of commotion, which more than

once had wellnigh burst out into a dangerous uproar; while the opposite party, satisfied with the conquest they had obtained, and disinclined to endanger their superiority, had remained inactive, and carefully avoided all occasions of unusual excitement.

They showed their inconsistency in more ways than one. They did not even care to resent the title of frog-eaters, they continued to make the frogs of Latona the common objects of their jests and sarcasms; but yet, Abderite-like, they allowed their croaking fellow-citizens to remain undisturbed in possession of the city and suburbs of Abdera, notwithstanding all the opinions of the academy and all the satire of Korax.

CHAPTER X.

Wonderful unravelling of the whole tragi-comic farce of —
the Abderites.

IN all probability the frogs of Latona would long have revelled in this security, but unfortunately in the following summer an innumerable multitude of rats and mice of all colours invaded the unhappy republic. All the country was covered with them, and thus the perfectly innocent and unconscious prediction of the archon Onocradias was unexpectedly fulfilled.

To be eaten by both frogs and mice at once was too much for the poor Abderites: the affair was a serious one. The Anti-froggites now pressed without further delay the carrying out of the proposal of the academy.

The Froggites exclaimed that the swarm of yellow, green, blue, blood-red, and puce-coloured

mice, which in a few days had made the most direful devastation in the Abderitan fields, was a visible punishment for the profaneness of the frog-eaters; and was evidently despatched direct from Latona, entirely to destroy the city which had so impiously withdrawn itself from the protection of the goddess.

It was in vain that the academy averred that yellow, green, blue, blood-red, and puce-coloured mice, were, notwithstanding, only mice like all others of the species; that the thing was perfectly natural; that similar instances were to be found registered in the annals of all nations; and that, as the mice seemed resolved that the Abderites should have nothing else to eat, they should at least try to overcome their prejudices and to revenge themselves on the eatable portion of their common enemies, namely, the frogs.

It was to no purpose that the priest Pamphagus hit upon a proposal to use the frogs for the future as regular sacrifices, the head and intestines to be immolated to the goddess, and the legs to be consumed by the people to her honour.

The people, terrified at their public calamity, which they looked upon no otherwise than as a punishment from their irritated goddess, and

incited by the heads of the Froggites, assembled in troops before the senate-house, and threatened not to leave a whole bone among the counsellors if they did not instantly find the means of saving the town from destruction.

Good advice was never so wanted in Abdera as at this moment. The counsellors perspired from anxiety, beat their foreheads, but all was empty within; the more they pondered, the less they knew what to do.

The people refused to depart, and swore to break the necks of all, Froggites and Anti-froggites, if they came to no successful conclusion.

At length Onocradidas arose, as if inspired, from his chair. "Follow me," said he to the senators, as he walked with hasty strides to the marble gallery appropriated for addresses to the people. His eyes sparkled with unusual lustre, he looked a head taller, and his whole figure assumed such a majestic appearance as none had ever before beheld in an Abderite.

The counsellors followed him in silence and full of expectation.

"Hear me, ye men of Abdera," said Onocradidas, in a voice unlike his own, "Jason, my great progenitor, has descended from the throne of the gods, and suggests to me at this moment

the means whereby I can save you all. Go each to your home, pack up your furniture and utensils, together with all the money you possess, and start to-morrow morning at break of day—with your wives and children, horses and asses, oxen and sheep, in short, with bag and baggage, to Jason's temple; from thence we will obtain the Golden Fleece, and, with the sacred Palladium of the Abderites at our head, turn our backs on these walls cursed by the gods, and in the distant plains of fertile Macedonia seek other habitations till the wrath of the deities has subsided, and then we, or our children, may again be permitted to return under happier auspices to beautiful Abdera. The destructive mice, when they find nothing else to consume, will devour one another—and as to the frogs, may Latona be gracious to them! Go, my children, and get yourselves ready; to-morrow, ere sunrise, shall our distresses end."

All the people shouted with approbation, at the inspired words of the archon, and at that moment breathed one mind only in all Abdera.

Their easily-excited imaginations rose up again full of flame. New prospects, new scenes of joy and happiness, danced before their mental view. The extensive plains of happy Macedonia

opened out like a fruitful paradise before their eyes. They already breathed a purer air, and longed, with indescribable impatience, to escape from the thick loathsome frog-sloughs and poisonous vapours of their native city.

All hastened to equip themselves for marching—a proceeding of which, only a few minutes previously, not one man among them had ever dreamt.

Very early the following morning all were ready to start from Abdera, leaving behind in their houses, without regret, such articles as could not be conveniently removed, so eager were they to reach a home where they would no longer be made miserable by frogs and mice.

On the fourth morning after their self-expatriation, King Cassander met them: the tramp of their host had been heard afar off, and the clouds of dust which they raised had eclipsed the daylight.

Cassander commanded his cavalcade to halt, and sent one of his attendants to inquire what was the matter.

“Sire,” said the messenger on his return, “they are the Abderites, driven from their city by rats, mice, and frogs, seeking another and more-favoured land.”

"If this be the case, they certainly are Abderites," said Cassander. In the mean time Onocradias appeared at the head of a deputation of senators and citizens to lay their case before the king.

The whole affair appeared so irresistibly funny to Cassander and his courtiers that, notwithstanding all their politeness, they could not keep from laughing in the faces of the Abderites, who, as they saw the whole court so tickled, held it incumbent on them to laugh too.

Cassander assured them of his protection, and pointed out a spot on the borders of Macedonia where they might remain until they could find means of coming to some reasonable arrangement with the frogs and mice of their native land.

From that time forward little more was heard of the Abderites and their transactions; yet so much is certain—that, several years after this singular emigration, the historical certainty of which is placed beyond all doubt, by the testimony of Justinus (in a fragmentary extract from the historian Trogus Pompeius) (lib. xv. c. 2), they removed back again to Abdera.

It seems probable that they left behind them in Macedonia those "bees in their bonnets,"

which had made more noise than all the rats and frogs in their city.

For from this epoch history says nothing further of them than that they, first under the protection of the Macedonian kings, and then of the Romans, passed their lives for several centuries in tranquillity; but as they were neither more ingenious, nor more stupid than other similar municipalities, they gave historical writers no occasion to talk about them at all.

To conclude, we will give the condescending reader full proof of our candour by stating that, so far as the elder Pliny and his universal authority, Varro, deserve belief, Abdera was not the only city in the world from which the inhabitants were driven by such apparently insignificant enemies as frogs and mice.

Varro not only mentions a city in Spain which was ruined by rabbits, and another demolished by moles, but also another in Gaul, the inhabitants of which, like the Abderites, were displaced by frogs! But as Pliny does not name the city which this misfortune befell, nor state from which of the innumerable works of the learned Varro he took the anecdote, we should perhaps not be wanting in the reverence due to so great

an authority, if we suggested that his memory, which sometimes appears to fail him, may have substituted one name for another, and Gallia in Thrace might be the place meant, and thus he might unconsciously be relating the history of Abdera itself.

And here we place the last stone on that monument which we have endeavoured to erect to the glory of a once-celebrated, but now almost-forgotten people. Inspired perhaps in so doing by that divinity who of old watched over their prosperity, and though this history is composed of no weightier materials than the caprices and follies of the Abderites, yet we may be allowed to hope that it may endure till our nation has arrived at that happy state when it will be no longer applicable, when such tales will neither irritate nor entertain anybody; in a word, till there are none sufficiently like to the Abderites to be offended at seeing their own image reflected in such annals, and until such adventures will be no more intelligible to us than the history of another planet.

This period cannot be far distant if only the youths of the twentieth century will be as much wiser than those of the nineteenth, as these think themselves wiser than the men of the

eighteenth, and if the books on education with which we are now so abundantly provided, do only one-tenth part of the good which their authors propose.

THE KEY TO THE ABDERITE HISTORY.

WHEN the poetry of Homer was first known to the Greeks, the people, who, in many things see more clearly with their unaided vision than learned gentlemen with eye-glasses, had understanding enough to discover that in all his great heroic fables,—in spite of the wonderful, the adventurous, and the incredible, with which his works are so richly interwoven—a nurse could find enough in them to sing her child to sleep with—that they possess much more wisdom and instruction for practical purposes than a Milesian nursery tale: and we see from the letter of Horace to Lollius, and from the use Plutarch makes, and advises others to make, of Homer, that, many ages after his time, sensible men of the world, both Greeks and Romans, have been

of opinion that more could be learned from Homer's fables than from the most subtle and eloquent sophistical doctrines, as to what was right and useful, what wrong or injurious, and how much a man may accomplish by virtue and wisdom.

It was left to old children, young ones were taught better, to adhere only to the material part of the poetry; sensible people felt and recognized the spirit which breathed through the work, and it never entered their minds to separate what was indissolubly joined together by the muse; they recognized the true under cover of the wondrous and the useful, by a kind of fusion not made known to all, united to the pleasant and the beautiful.

It was the same here, as in all human things. The learned men of modern times, not satisfied at finding in Homer's poetry warning or encouraging examples, an instructive picture of human nature in its different shades, circumstances, or scenes, endeavoured to plunge deeper, and to see more than their predecessors; and so it was discovered (as what could not be discovered, if a man will but set his mind on discovery?) that what were only intended as examples, were allegorical, and in all, even to the

machinery and decorations of the poetic theatre, there was a mystic sense; and at last, every person, every occurrence, every picture, every little fable, concealed heaven knows what mysteries, of the Hermetic, Orphic, and Magic philosophy, of which the worthy author dreamt as little, in the innocence of his heart, as did Virgil that, twelve hundred years after his death, his verses would be used to conjure up evil spirits.

In the mean time it was gradually made into an essential condition of epic poetry, as the greater and more heroic of poetical fables were called, that, besides the natural and the moral sense which lay on the surface, there must also be another meaning, hidden and allegorical—at least this whim prevailed among the Italians and the Spaniards; and it is more than ridiculous to observe what extraordinary trouble the commentators, and even the poets themselves sometimes took to spin out from an Amadis, or an Orlando, from Trissino's *Liberated Italy*, from the *Lusiad* of Camoens, or even from the *Adone* of Marino, all sorts of metaphysical, political, moral, physical, and theological allegories. As it was not thought the reader's business to penetrate in his own might into all these mysteries, so it became necessary to give him the exposi-

tion of the allegoric or mystic sense; although the author seldom thought, before his work was finished, of the concealed likenesses and allusions that might be cunningly drawn therefrom.

What was done by many authors in compliance with the reigning fashion, to which they dared not oppose themselves, became to others the real aim and principal business of their works. The celebrated *Zodiacus vitæ* of the so-called Palingenius, Barclay's *Argenis*, Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, the new *Atlantis* of Mrs. Manly, the *Malabar Princess*, *The Tale of a Tub*, the *Story of John Bull*, and many works of the same kind, in which the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were so fertile, were, from their nature and purpose, allegorical, and could not be understood without a key, although several of them—for instance, Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, and the allegorical scenes of Dean Swift—are so constructed that any sensible person on perusal could find the key without assistance.

This short deduction will be sufficient to make those who never before thought about it comprehend how it happens that, in the majority of minds, a common opinion has imperceptibly arisen, that every book bearing any likeness to a

satirical romance, must be inspired with a hidden sense, and consequently require a key.

The editor of the present story, being aware that the greater part of his readers are persuaded that something lies at the bottom beyond what the words at first sight seem to imply, and consequently are requiring a key to the Abderite history, regarding it as an absolute necessity for understanding this interesting work, is not surprised at the desire so frequently expressed; on the contrary, he feels himself bound to satisfy them in this present complete and enlarged edition, and to present them with a key—or rather, instead of the required key, what is the same thing, to communicate to them all that can be useful or necessary to the proper understanding of a book written for the pleasure of all people of sense, and for a lesson and punishment to all fools.

To this effect, he finds it necessary to communicate to them, above all things, the origin of the story in the unadulterated and genuine words of the author, a writer who, though but little known, has been very much read since the year 1753.

“It was,” so says the narrative, “on a fine autumn evening, in the year 177—, that I was

alone in the upper floor of my residence, and looked—for I am not ashamed to confess my share in any human infirmity—a long while out of window. For many weeks before my genius had altogether left me; I could neither think nor read. All the fire of my spirit seemed to be extinct; and all my imagination, like volatile salts, to have evaporated. I was stupid—but ah! without sharing in the bliss of stupidity, without possessing a single grain of self-satisfaction, that unshaken conviction which assures certain people that all which they think, say, dream, or talk about in their sleep is true, witty, wise, and deserving to be engraved on marble. A persuasion which makes the true son of the great goddess easily recognizable, and feel himself the happiest of mankind; in short, I *felt* my situation, and it laid heavily upon me; I struggled against it in vain, and it went so far with me that I stared at the people through a tolerably uncomfortable window, without knowing what I was looking at, or seeing anything that was worth the sight. At once I felt as if I heard a voice, whether a reality or delusion I shall not decide, but it said to me, ‘Sit down and write the history of the Abderites.’ A sudden light broke in upon me,—‘Yes! yes!’ cried I, ‘the

Abderites! what can be more natural! I *will* write the history of the Abderites. How could it have happened that so natural an idea did not occur to me long ago? and then I sat down and wrote, and looked for facts, and compiled, and arranged, and wrote again, and it was a pleasure to see how rapidly the work advanced in my hands.

“As I was in the best humour for writing,” continues our author, in his most sincere confession, “I seized, in a moment of caprice, the idea of letting loose my imagination, and pushing the thing as far as it would go. It concerns only the Abderites, thought I, and it is impossible to do them an injustice; they are nothing more than a set of fools, the nonsense with which history loads them is great enough to excuse everything attributed to them, however inconceivable. I confess this openly, and if I am wrong, may Heaven pardon me! I endeavoured to raise my imagination to the utmost, in order to make the Abderites think, speak, and act as foolishly as possible. ‘More than 2000 years are gone by since they were all dead and buried,’ said I to myself; ‘and it cannot do any harm to them, or their descendants, of whom not a relic remains that I know of.’ To all this came another suggestion, which

gained on me by an appearance of sincerity. 'The more absurd I make them,' thought I, 'the less have I to fear that "The Abderites" should be taken for a satire on other people of whom I have no knowledge;' but I was mistaken in this conclusion, as the result has shown that I have unconsciously painted portraits, when I was only exercising my imagination."

It must be confessed that it was the worst misfortune that could have befallen an author who had no guile in his heart, and never wished to vex his fellow-creatures, but only to amuse himself and them, and drive away *ennui*. Nevertheless this is what befell the author in his very first chapter.

There is no town in Germany, nor within the natural limits of the German language, which is spoken, by the bye, over a larger extent of country than any other European tongue can boast, where "the Abderites" have not met with readers; and, wherever it has been read, the descriptions it contains have been received as portraits, of which everybody had seen the originals in a thousand places where, says the author, "I had never been, and where I had not the slightest acquaintance; it was a matter of astonishment how I could know so much of the

Abderitish men and women, and customs which were to be found in Abdera; and it was thought that I had either a secret correspondence, or a familiar spirit who furnished me with anecdotes which I could not learn in a proper way. I knew," he continued, "that I had neither the one nor the other, consequently it was clear as day that the ancient race of Abdera was not so entirely extinct as I had imagined."

This discovery induced the author to make inquiries, which he deemed unnecessary as long as in writing his work he referred more to his imagination and humour than to chronicles and history. However, he searched through many small and large volumes without effect, but at last found, in the sixth decade of the renowned "Hafen Hawkenbergius, p.m. 864," the following passage, which unexpectedly afforded him an explanation of these phenomena.

"The good town of Abdera, in Thrace," says Hawkenbergius in the above-mentioned passage, "formerly a large, populous, and commercial place—the Thracian Athens—the birthplace of Protagoras and Democritus, the paradise of fools and frogs. This good and beautiful town of Abdera exists no longer! In vain we seek for it in the maps or descriptions of Thrace, even the site

whereon it stood is unknown, or can only be pointed out from conjecture. But it is not so with the Abderites; they live and move still (although their primitive habitation has long since disappeared from the face of the earth), undestroyed and immortal, they are found everywhere, without enjoying a settled site; and, although scattered among the nations, they remain, to the present day, pure, unmixed, and faithful to their original Abderitan fashions and manners; so with an Abderite, wherever found, it is only necessary to look at him and listen to him for a moment to be certain that he is one—just as a Jew is recognized in Frankfort, Leipsic, Constantinople, or Aleppo, as soon as he is seen. But what is a very extraordinary thing, and a circumstance in which they differ from the Jews, the Bedouins, the Armenians, and all other unmixed nations, is, that without the least danger to their Abderitism, they mingle with the other inhabitants of the earth; and, notwithstanding that they speak everywhere the language of the country in which they live, acknowledge in common the constitutions, religion, and customs of the non-Abderites, eat and drink, walk and act, dress and adorn themselves, curl and perfume their hair, purge and physic themselves; and, in

short, perform everything that is necessary in human life—just like others, they, I say, notwithstanding this, remain like to themselves only, in all that constitutes them Abderites, just as if from remotest time they had been separated from the sensible beings of our planet by a diamond wall, thrice as high and thick as the walls of Babylon.

“All other samples of mankind change by transplantation, and the mixture of two varieties produce a third but with Abderites, where-soever they have transplanted, and howsoever they have mixed with other people, no change has ever been noticed. They are still the same fools they were two thousand years before in Abdera; and although after so long a period it cannot be said, look here, or look there, for Abdera, there is not a market-town, village, or hamlet, throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, or America, where some members of this scattered society are not to be found!” So much from the above-mentioned “Hafen Hawkenbergius.”

“After having read this passage,” continues our author, “I discovered at once the key to those before-mentioned experiences, which appeared to me at the first glance so incomprehensible, and so well did the relation of Hawkenber-

gius render intelligible to me what had occurred with the Abderites, that I was confirmed in the belief of their present existence. Thus, the Abderites left a progeny which spread itself into all countries, and had numerous descendants, and as the character and adventures of the ancient Abderites have been preserved in anecdotes and pictures, so the identity of the modern ones has been proved by their strange quality of uniformity and immutability—differing in this respect, according to the above authority, from all other inhabitants of the Continents and the Isles.

“This intelligence, received from all quarters, is a great consolation to me, on two grounds: first, I was freed from the self-reproach of having imputed too much folly to the Abderites; and secondly, I learned that my work was read with pleasure, even by the Abderites themselves, and that especially the striking likeness between the old and new ones very much surprised them, and was regarded by them as a flattering proof of the authenticity of their descent. The few who complained that they were painted too true to nature, could be little considered by the multitude who were satisfied; and, perhaps, even those few would do better if they took the

thing otherwise; because, since, as it seems, they are unwilling to be taken for what they are, and for that reason have put themselves into the skin of a noble animal—prudence would require them not to stick out their ears so as to be remarked, which cannot be to their advantage.

“On the other side, I was glad that circumstances arose to remind me that I was writing the history of the old Abderites, almost under the eyes of the new ones—as it kept in check my imagination (which at the commencement had been left to ramble much at its own will), and caused me carefully to avoid all caricature, and, finally, to render strict justice to the Abderites in all I have said of them. I look upon myself as the historian of the antiquities of a flourishing family, which would be entitled to take it very ill if I imputed anything unjustly to their predecessors.”

The history of the Abderites may be taken as one of the truest and surest, and as a faithful mirror, wherein the modern ones may look at their own faces, and, with a little honesty, discover distinctly how far they are like their ancestors. Many words would be useless to prove the great utility of this work as long as Ab-

derites exist, which will undoubtedly be for ages yet to come.

It will also be of occasional service, in making the descendants of old Germans among us more careful to avoid everything which could give rise to suspicion that they were of Abderite blood, or endeavouring to acquire a likeness to this people, and may cure such persons of admiring Abderitan manners and arts; or falling into an imitation of them, by which they on their part have little to gain.

This, worthy reader, is the promised key to this remarkable and original work, to which I give you the additional assurance, that you have not a single drawer which you could not open therewith. Should anybody whisper in your ear that something more is concealed, you may safely believe either that he does not understand what he is talking about, or that he means no good.

SAPIENTIA PRIMA EST
STULTITIA CARUISSE.

NOTE ON
PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANCE,
BY THE TRANSLATOR.

PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANCE.

THE History of Prose Romance is a very curious one. It is not a very ancient form of composition; we had long and philosophical histories, essays on all imaginable subjects, formal treatises, and regular biographies, before it seemed to occur to any writer, that prose was even a fitter vehicle than verse for a fictitious narrative. It did not impose the same rules, nor require the same dignity. It allowed the colloquial style for conversation, the poetical for description, the historical for narrative; and it permitted all these to be changed at the author's pleasure. It is, therefore, somewhat strange that we have no prose romances of the time of Pericles. It might have been an agreeable change for an Athenian critic, at any period during the supremacy of that glorious city in art, science, and literature, to have passed from

the examination of a play by Aristophanes, an oration by Demosthenes, a history by Thucydides, an ode by Pindar, or a new edition of any such productions, to the glittering pages of an Athenian Walter Scott, or what would have been more probable, an Athenian Bulwer Lytton. However, none such have descended to our times, and the romance, as we apply the term, did not dawn upon society till long after every other species of composition had reached its perfection. It seems probable that the first notion of the romance arose from a feeling that the interests of morality might be served by it—not that the first fictitious narratives are remarkable for their high moral tone, far from it, but that nothing is more likely to have occurred to the earliest moralists. “History is Philosophy teaching by examples,” says an ancient adage; but History cannot choose her examples, she is obliged to take them as they come, and record their fates as they occur. She cannot make a prosperous tyrant an instance of poetical justice; she cannot raise a poor and virtuous peasant to a throne; she makes the most of what she has, but her teaching is often widely different from that which the moralist might desire. Now, if fiction be permitted, all this difficulty may be

got over at once; all the virtues and all the vices may be displayed without hindrance; the one may be rewarded, and the other punished; and the reader may lay down the volume with the comfortable sensation that all the personages it describes have received their deserts, and the only drawback to his enjoyment will be the consciousness that no such results are to be found in "real life."

The next step was to make romance special. Romances of love were, of course, the earliest of this species; romances of chivalry followed after a long interval; and lastly came the novel, which is peculiarly a production of our own times, and in which life is represented, or meant to be represented, even as in a mirror.

But before this, and, indeed, long before any regular narrative was attempted in fiction, there arose a form of composition, which, for want of a better title, has been called the Philosophical Romance. The object of this was the development of some theory, chiefly of morals or politics, and it has happened, fortunately for the success of this species of writing, that it has fallen into the hands of some of the most illustrious of mankind. Despairing of being able to influence the age in which they lived, so as

to gain a trial for their plans, such men as Plato, More, and Bacon, returned to their studies, and there drew up the scheme of an imaginary commonwealth, in which virtue might be more effectually encouraged and practised, and vice and crime more effectually repressed, than was found to be the case in the existing governments of the world. The example which they gave in literature has been followed, and as the number of their imitators increased, so at the same time the sphere of their observation enlarged, and the experience of modern times was pressed into the service of politico-philosophical romance.

Two changes deserve notice: one is, that the more modern the romance, the more it takes the form of the romance proper—it is a narrative of adventures, the hero enlists our sympathies on behalf of himself, and adorns the narrative with all the charms of perilous escape, glorious achievement, and passionate feelings. Who can help contrasting the story of Gulliver or Zanonì with the dry detail and impersonal character of Plato's *Republic*, or More's *Utopia*?

Another change is still more remarkable,—the earlier romances are all eminently constructive—they exhibit in action what the author

wished to recommend. They show his notion of a perfect government, a faultless system of morals, or an infallible philosophy. The consequence of this is, that the reader, unless very philosophically inclined, is but little interested; he feels that he is reading a political or a moral treatise, and in his own mind treats it as such; for its impersonal heroes he has no sympathy, and the very perfection of its arrangements removes at once all anxiety and nearly all interest.

Modern philosophical romances are eminently destructive; they display, not the perfections which ought to exist, but the faults which do: they exhibit tyranny, corruption, oppression, folly, arrogance, ruin, and they aim at bringing the errors of actual governments before the world by making manifest their effects in imaginary cases—such are *Gulliver's Travels*, and that most extraordinary of all modern works of this kind, the *History of the Abderites*, by Von Wieland, which ought to be called "The Republic of Fools."

In examining the works which have most attracted, in this direction, the attention of the world, we shall commence with the most renowned of all, THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO.

This work is the earliest example of the phi-

losophical romance ; it has occasioned, we might also say included, the *Utopia* and the *Atlantis*, the *Oceana* and the *Gaudentio di Lucca*, and is greater than either or all of these. Plato speaks the language which Jupiter would speak if Jupiter spoke Greek ; and not only is there this supreme power and splendour, not only the weight, the depth, the gloom, the glory, but the apt allusion, the delicate humour, the graceful repartee, the covert irony,—are all here. The lowest as well as the highest chords discourse their music—with what exquisite grace !—as the simple incidents of the opening pages glide into the serious business of the dialogue ; gradually the group in the household of the kindly-hearted old Cephalus becomes, as it were, transfigured, and we are conscious of lights, and sounds, and visions that are scarcely of this world.

Yet should we draw a distinction between the higher parts of the dialogue, the metaphysical and the religious element, and its political and practical features. With the theory of the ideas, with the train of thought associated with the cave scene and the vision of Er, our present business has no concern. There are many points of view from which the *Republic* can be investigated ;

and critics are still undecided as to its central idea. We shall confine ourselves to that department which includes Plato's conception of the possible constitution of a State—no mere dream of an enthusiast or theorist, but what he hoped and believed was practicable and attainable.

It is not till the middle of the second book that we arrive at anything of this description. The first book gives us the portraiture of the Sophist, and a discussion on justice. It is hard, he finds, to settle the notion of justice from an investigation into individual character. But what cannot be read in little print, may be read in large. Justice may be predicated of a State as well as of an Individual. With Plato, an individual is a State seen through a diminishing lens; a State is an individual seen through a magnifying one. Let us see what is the Justice of a Republic: we may then discern the justice of the conscious "self."

Step by step he points out the rise and progress of a State. Man cannot be isolated: self-sufficiency is a chimera. We will suppose our State only consists of four or five people at the commencement. They must all labour, and there must be a division of labour. Society is first made up of some one to till the ground,

some one to construct huts, some one to make clothes, and some one else to make shoes. By-and-by we discover the need of carpenters, smiths, shepherds, and graziers; next a foreign trade arises. Trade implies shops and a currency, ships and sailors, labourers and merchants. At this point our State is furnished with necessities. But it will insist on also being provided with luxuries: the actor, the physician, and the poet, are all looked upon in this light; as also the barber and the tirewoman. Furthermore, it demands the dishes of Sicily, and the dancers of Corinth, and we shall now want more territory than we happen to possess; consequently we must go to war; we must have soldiers who are to be as faithful watch-dogs, a guardian class to the State.

And now Socrates—for Socrates is always the mouthpiece of Plato—gives us his theory of education. Nothing is so important as this, especially in the outset of life, when the mind is gathering shape and colour from external influences. We must not teach it the poetry of Homer; for Homer professes a popular morality, or rather no morality at all. Our children must not hear unworthy fables of the gods, nor ought anything in the character of great men,

which is mean, sensual, or ridiculous, to be brought before their notice. They must not become acquainted with the imagery of terror attached to death. They must be trained to truth, courage, and self-control. The style of speech and writing, by and to which they are to be educated, must be simple and severe, and admit very sparingly of the mimetic element. In music the Lydian and the Ionian must be discarded, as also the mixed Lydian and the hyper-Lydian; for these harmonies are either plaintive, convivial, or effeminate. But leave me, says Socrates, the Dorian and the Phrygian,—the one a high and rushing music, such as may suit a brave man in the clash of battle; and the other low and tranquil, meet for a man in a calm, prayerful, or persuasive attitude.

But our sense of the word music includes only a small part of the meaning which the Greeks attached to the term. All education was divided into music and gymnastic, and nearly everything that was not included in the one ranked under the other. This “music” is a sense of the beauty, and harmony, and proportion that ought to pervade every relation of life. To make a perfect man, both mind and body must be equally trained; but notice that the training of the body is not

for the sake of the body, but only as a means to the perfect development of the mind.

Thus, in our State we have a class of guardians, or rather two classes, guardian magistrates and guardian troops; and a third class, the class of producers. Now, compare this conception of a State with the conception of an individual—the guardian auxiliaries and the productive class in the State correspond to the rational element, the spirited element, and the concupiscent element in the individual. Thus a man is wise by virtue of the wisdom of his rational element, courageous by virtue of the courage of his spirited element, and temperate when the rational element governs with the full consent of the other two; and, finally, just when each of the three performs its proper work without meddling with that of the others. This scheme has some remarkable resemblances with the system propounded by Bishop Butler in the *Analogy* and the *Sermons*.

In the fifth book Plato propounds his famous theory of the community of women and children. For a very different view of the same idea we might compare the *Lysistrata* of Aristophanes. Plato, of course, makes out his case very triumphantly, and constructs such objec-

tions as he can easily confute. There is a great deal of profound truth and wisdom in the exalted views which he takes, so unusual in his age, of the character of woman; he attributes to her as high a degree of mental influence as would Mr. Mill himself. If a woman has a turn for philosophy or war, she is to share the duties of the guardian or auxiliary, become the wife of the one or the other. Such marriages are to be arranged entirely by the State, though sanctified by religious solemnities. The children are to be separated from their parents, and brought up in a State establishment. It is only by his system of communion that Plato thinks all private interests can be merged in public interests. And when it is demanded by Adeimantus, one of the principal interlocutors in the dialogue, how far such a state of things is practicable, the answer is, that this is a consideration which does not affect the soundness of the method, or the truth of the results. He is sketching a perfect State, and all that can be asked of him is, in what way might an imperfect State attain the nearest approximation to this. To this grand result one, and only one, great fundamental change is necessary. A State can never attain its perfect development till

kings are philosophers, and philosophers are kings. The difference between the genuine and the counterfeit philosopher is this—the latter contents himself with the study of the beautiful objects around him; the former penetrates into the very essence of beauty itself. The one intellectual State is opinion, the other intellectual State is knowledge, which alone takes cognizance of real existence.

At the commencement of the sixth book the characteristics of the true philosopher are enumerated thus:—1. He must have an intense desire for this knowledge. 2. He must hate falsehood and love the truth. 3. He must despise the pleasures of the body. 4. He must not care for money. 5. He must be liberal and high-minded. 6. He must be just and gentle. 7. He must possess a quick memory and a quick apprehension. 8. His disposition must be musical, regular, and harmonious.

We are now upon the ground of the ideas, the forms or archetypes of visible objects. But to this subject belongs quite a literature of itself; it would be surpassingly difficult to display the subject adequately at all—an utter impossibility to us within so restricted limits; and a knowledge of this higher wisdom can only be

brought about by the agency of all studies that draw the mind from the sensuous to the real, from the temporal to the eternal, from the visible to the invisible. It may be interesting to give the classification of such studies. The following is the series:—1. Arithmetic. 2. Plain geometry. 3. Geometry of three dimensions. 4. Astronomy, which means here the abstract science of motion. 5. The science of harmonies. 6. Dialectic, or the science of real existence.

At this point we fall back upon the subject of the earlier books, that is, the constitution of the mind and the constitution of a polity. He gives an exhaustive division of politics; first, is the perfect State and the perfect man, an aristocracy and an aristocrat; but even this high state has a tendency to shade off into something lower.

This is timarchy, a State where the principle of honour, a principle of emulation, ambition, and recklessness largely prevails. It succeeds the former State just as we may imagine the son of a truly noble being led partly astray by other influences from the high exemplar of his father. And this timarchy slips into an oligarchy, which is defined as a State where political power resides according to a money qualification.

Here we have a parallel in common life. The ambitious man has suffered from his ambitious schemes, and his son betakes himself to the safer employment of money-making. And so the series continues, till we are at the last landed at the tyrant, the latest and the worst.

Finally, Plato resolves to expel all poets from his Republic. We might have gathered as much from the earlier books. But though Plato may expel poets from his Republic, the *Republic* remains an embodied poem in itself.

The work closes in a double apologue, with what Milton would call a "regal argument" on the eternity and blessedness of justice.

The notion of an ideal republic did not originate with Plato. Before his age, Hippodamus, the architect of the Piræus, conceived a similar plan, a hint of the nature of which we may gather from Aristotle. The difference between the two is striking, but natural. Hippodamus was an architect, and so devoted more attention to the *material* structure of the State: Plato was a philosopher, and bestowed more care upon the *spirit* by which its members should be actuated. Hippodamus divides the lands belonging to the commonwealth into three parts: the sacred, which is to be set apart for the necessi-

ties of public worship; the common, for the benefit of the soldiery; and the private, for the husbandmen. The law also he portions out into three divisions, acknowledging only three sorts of social crime—insults, damages, and death. The inhabitants of the State are separated into soldiers, artificers, and husbandmen; and the magistrates are to be elected by the free suffrages of their fellow-citizens. The imaginary commonwealth of Hippodamus is not lightly censured by Aristotle, who finds much confusion in the ideas of its author.

Then there is the Republic of Phaleas, of Chalcedon, also mentioned by Aristotle, the chief feature of which is the equalisation of all property; and lastly the curious description of a State in an unknown part of the world, given by Theopompos, of Chios, in *Ælian*, in 18.

Theopompos, says *Ælian*, gives an account of a conversation between Midas, the Phrygian, and Silenus:—

This “Silenus was the son of a nymph; and though of a nature inferior to that of the gods, yet superior to that of mortals. He informs Midas that Europe, Asia, and Libya, are islands surrounded by the sea; but declares that there is beyond the limits of the known world a continent

of infinite magnitude, inhabited by animals of wondrous bulk, and by men of twice the common height, and twice the usual term of life ; that they have many and great States, and many customs contrary to ours. He declares that there are among them two very great cities, totally different from one another. The name of the one is *Machimos*, that is, 'warlike;' of the other *Eusebes*, that is, 'pious.' The inhabitants of the latter pass their days in peace, and in the midst of great plenty, without ploughs or oxen, for they have no need of agriculture, or of sowing ; they are, moreover, free from disease, and live in smiles and pleasures ; so little is strife known among them, and so entirely are they ruled by justice, that the gods themselves do not disdain to hold intercourse with them.

"The inhabitants of the former city, on the other hand, are most prone to war. They live constantly under arms, and are incessantly fighting and striving to reduce their neighbours into subjection ; so that this one State holds sway over very many others. Its inhabitants are not less than two millions. Sometimes they die of disease, but very rarely ; for, for the most part, they perish in battle, crushed by stones or beaten by clubs, for by iron they cannot be wounded.

Gold and silver they possess in such quantities, that gold is of less value among them than iron with us. It is said that once upon a time they attempted to cross the sea for the purpose of making an attack upon this part of the world, and that a thousand myriads (a million) of men penetrated as far as the Hyperboreans, but that when they learned that these were the most flourishing people in our part of the world, they despised them as leading a vile and inglorious life, and thought it not worth their while to go further."

Silenus also added this, which is much more extraordinary, viz. that—

"There is in those parts a nation called Me-ropes, who inhabit many and great States. In the confines of their country there is a place called Anoston, that is, the place whence there is no return. Here there is neither light nor darkness, but an obscure atmosphere pervaded by a kind of ruddy glow. Through this region flow two rivers; the one called the river of 'pleasure,' the other that of 'grief,' and on the banks of each are trees of the size of a great plane tree. Those which grow by the river of grief produce fruits of a corresponding quality; so that, if any one eat of them, for the whole of the rest of his life he weeps and mourns, till

death comes to his relief. The other trees on the banks of the river of pleasure bear fruits of a contrary nature, for he who tastes of them is relieved from all his former passions: if he has loved any one he forgets him, and gradually becomes younger and younger, and enters again upon past years, and casts aside his old age, and is restored to the vigour of youth, then to boyhood, then to infancy, and then at last expires."

The reader will at once observe that in the above passage from Ælian there is an indistinct allusion to something like a notion of the existence of America. Modern investigations have established the fact that great kingdoms existed and flourished, and died out in Peru and Mexico, long ages before the New World was discovered by Columbus, and Lord Bacon will appear to have alluded to one of this nature in his *Atlantis*.

Of the *Panchaia* of Euhemeros but little remains. He was a traveller, who, instead of furnishing to the world on his return any real and serviceable geographical information as the result of his researches, contented himself with a romantic account of an island which he pretended he had discovered somewhere, we believe in the Indian Ocean, the capital of which had

had the honour of having been the seat of the empire of Zeus when he was a mortal. Diodorus Siculus has borrowed largely from this book, and with the exception of what we find in him and Eusebius, the work of Euhemeros is now entirely lost.

From these ancient romances to those of the sixteenth century is obviously a wide leap, and one which, were it the object of the present note to give anything like a connected sketch of philosophical romance would be as obviously unjustifiable. But our limits will not allow this to be more than a *note*; and, therefore, passing over many treatises which would otherwise require consideration, and especially the "*Metamorphoses*" of Apuleius — a book commonly known by the name of "*The Golden Ass*," we shall proceed to notice, at some length, the chief philosophical romance of our own country, the "*Utopia*" of Sir Thomas More.

"Henry the Eighth," says the author, "the unconquered King of England, a prince adorned with all the virtues that become a great monarch, having some differences of no small consequence with Charles, the most serene Prince of Castille, sent me into Flanders as his ambassador for treating and composing matters between them."

Negotiations having, for some cause or another, come, for a time, to a standstill, More went to Antwerp, and there was visited, among others, by one Peter Giles, a native of Antwerp, a man of great honour and of good rank. Through this friend he became acquainted with a most interesting personage, a native of Portugal, whose name was Raphael Hythloday, one who had borne a share in three out of the four voyages of Americus Vesputius, and was supposed to be able to tell more of unknown nations and countries than any other man alive. During the last voyage of Americus, Raphael had solicited from him the favour of being left, with three-and-twenty others, at the farthest place at which they touched, and, with five Castilians, he travelled over many countries, till—

“At last, by a strange and good fortune, he got to Ceylon, and from thence to Calicut, and then he very happily found some Portuguese ships, and so, beyond all men’s expectation, he came back to his own country.”

More, Giles, and Raphael, after the usual civilities and courtesies of an introduction, proceed together to More’s house, and entering into the garden, and “sitting down on a green bank,

entertain one another in discourse." Raphael recounts to his listeners his doings after having been left, with his companions, by Vespuccius, in New Castille. He relates the progress he made in the graces of the princes and inhabitants of the country, and tells how he visited many of their towns and cities, which he says were all happily governed and well peopled. Raphael goes on to state that the people of those parts understood both astronomy and navigation, and that he got into great favour with them by adding to their knowledge the use of the needle. His auditors listened attentively, and asked him many questions, to which he replied very willingly, "only they made no inquiries after monsters," but about the States which he described as being so well and so wisely governed.

Then follows a long digression, which, however, More tells us, was the occasion which led Raphael to speak more minutely of the government of the commonwealth of the Utopians. Peter Giles being struck with admiration at the accounts of all that Raphael had witnessed, and at his judicious remarks upon what he had seen, asks him how it was he had never entered into the service of some prince, when his learning

and knowledge of men and things would have rendered him so acceptable and so useful? Raphael answers that he saw no reason why he should enslave himself to any king whatsoever. Giles and More both reply, that that was not the object of the question, and suggest that he would be conferring benefits upon others and not enslaving himself by giving any prince the advantage of his great experience.

Raphael, however, does not appear to suppose that the benefit would be so great as they seemed to imagine, for that princes were too self-sufficient and self-willed to tolerate much advice; and he accidentally mentions that he had once been in England and had stayed some months in that country. Then follows a well-drawn and excellent character of John Morton, Cardinal, Chancellor of England, and Archbishop of Canterbury, with whom our traveller had been on intimate terms, and a very long discussion upon the subject of hanging for theft, in which Raphael assigns the cause of the great prevalence of stealing to the vast number of idle followers kept by the great men of the day; and to the enclosing so much land in different parts of the country, by those into whose hands the property of which Henry VIII. despoiled

the Church had come, after the destruction of the religious houses, and suggests the necessity of better education for the people, who, he says, are first made thieves, and then punished for being so. Raphael argues moreover, that it is not lawful, *i. e.* according to Divine law, "to take away a man's life for a little money," and holds up in imitation the example of the Polylerites, a considerable and well-governed people of Persia, among whom the thief is made to work for the public.

But as a cure for the evils which so commonly exist among men, Raphael then proceeds to make a proposal—with which we can hardly fancy that many will agree, and which we are at a loss to imagine how a man like More could have brought himself to make and to suggest—that because property is so unequally divided among mankind, it should therefore be totally annihilated. He cannot think, "that as long as there is any property, and while money is the standard of all other things, a nation can be governed either justly or happily, and he expresses his agreement with Plato, and does not wonder that he resolved not to make any laws for such as would not submit to a community of all things." Aristotle, ages ago, and others

since his time, have written upon this subject; and in this age of the world it is surely unnecessary to argue out a matter which has been frequently discussed, or to point out to the reader how that property is an institution of God himself, and one great means which He uses for the improvement and civilization of his creatures. Raphael, however, quotes the Utopians as having a constitution, of which perfect equalization of property was one distinguishing characteristic, and declares that they are so happy a people, that after spending five years with them, he was so delighted that he would never have left them, had it not been that he desired to make known his discovery of that new world to the inhabitants of Europe. He declares them to have been a nation of so great antiquity, that "they had towns among them before these parts were so much as inhabited." They knew little of Europeans, and "called us all by a general name of the nations that lie beyond the equinoctial line;" and their chronicle mentions, that about twelve hundred years before Raphael visited them, some Romans and Egyptians being shipwrecked on their coast, having got safe to shore, spent the rest of their days among them. From them they learned

many arts with which they had been before unacquainted. More then desires to be further informed with regard to these happy people, and Raphael expresses his perfect willingness to gratify his curiosity, but suggests that his description of them is likely to occupy a considerable period of time. More, Peter, and Raphael, accordingly go and dine, and they, after dinner, having returned to the same green bank, Raphael begins the description of Utopia, and the manners and actions of its inhabitants, which occupies the second book of More's work.

The island of Utopia (the meaning of the word Utopia will be "the place which has no existence;" and its capital Amaurot, or "the invisible city," is built upon the bank of the Anider, "or river without water,") is in the form of a crescent, about two hundred miles broad at its greatest breadth. Between its horns, as it were, is a sea eleven miles broad, which spreads itself into a large bay, coasted by about five hundred miles of land. It is reported to have formed originally part of the neighbouring continent, and was formerly called Abraxa, but derives its present name from Utopus, who, having conquered the island, brought rude and uncivilized inhabitants into

a happy and flourishing condition. There are fifty-four cities in the island, all large and well built, governed by the same laws and customs, and arranged as nearly in the same manner as the ground on which they stand will allow. The capital is Amaurot, which lies near the centre of the island, on the banks of the Anider. Each city has assigned to it twenty miles of soil in its immediate neighbourhood, on which are built farm-houses, well contrived and furnished with everything for country labour. "Inhabitants are sent by turns from these cities to dwell in these farms, and no country family has fewer than forty men and women in it, besides two slaves. There is a master and mistress set over every family, and over every thirty families a magistrate. Every twenty of this family come back to the town after they have stayed two years in the country, and in their room there are other twenty sent from the town."

The reader will perceive a certain lack of sagacity in this arrangement: we can hardly imagine a State so constituted that every one, no matter what his usual trade or profession may be, is to be torn away from it, and every few years made to take his turn at the plough,

whether he like it or not. So Sir Thomas More appears to have thought, for he shortly afterwards adds:—

“But though there is every year such a shifting of the husbandmen, that none may be forced against his mind to follow that hard course of life too long, yet many among them taste such pleasure in it, that they desire leave to continue many years in it.”

The produce of the soil, of course, belongs to the towns, and at harvest-time the country magistrates send to those in the towns, and tell them exactly how many hands will be required to-reap, “and the number they call for being sent to them, they commonly despatch it all in one day.” When they want anything in “the country” which it does not produce, they fetch it from the town, without carrying anything in exchange for it, and the magistrates of the town take care to see it given them.

The capital, Amaurot, is built upon the side of a hill, about sixty miles from the mouth of the Anider; its form is nearly square, its build-ings are good, and so uniform, that a whole side of a street looks like one house. As no one possesses any property, every man may freely enter into any house whatsoever, and at the end

of every ten years the inhabitants shift their houses by lot. Every thirty families each year choose over themselves a magistrate, formerly called the syphogrant, but now the philarch, (the literal meaning of this word is "fond of ruling,"—it is not improbable that Sir Thomas More may have written *Phylarch*, the name of an officer among the Athenians, signifying "captain of a tribe,") and over every ten syphogrants, with the families subject to them, another magistrate, formerly called the tranibore, but now the archphilarch. The syphogrants are two hundred in number, and by them the prince is elected out of a list of four, named by the people of the four divisions of the city.

The prince is elected for life, subject, however, to removal upon suspicion of any design to enslave the people; the tranibores are newly chosen every year, but they are for the most part still continued in their office; all the other magistrates are only annual.

The tranibores meet the prince every third day for consultation; and to them are added two syphogrants, who are changed every day; and no Act can be passed with reference to anything that relates to the public till it has been three days debated in this council.

As a means of protection for the people against any plots on the part of the prince and the tranibores, every important measure is first sent to the syphogrants, who again communicate it to the families of their divisions, and having considered it among themselves, repeat the result to the Senate.

On very great occasions, the matter is referred to the council of the whole island. They, moreover, have a rule to debate nothing on the day when it is first proposed, in order that men may not rashly, and without due consideration for the public welfare, engage themselves too soon to a biassed opinion upon the subject in question.

With regard to dress, the same sort of clothing is worn all over the island, without any other distinction than such as is necessary for marking the difference between the two sexes, and between the married and unmarried. One great duty of the syphogrants is, to take care that no man lives in idleness, but follows his trade diligently: yet they do not work as we do, from morning till night, as if they were beasts of burden; but out of the twenty-four hours they set apart six for work, three of them before dinner; after that they dine, and interrupt their labour for

two hours, then work for the other three hours, and after that sup, and at eight o'clock, counting from noon, go to bed, and sleep eight hours.

Some there are among them, who, if they appear to give promise of proficiency in learning, are privileged from labour by the syphogrants, and allowed to apply themselves to study; and out of these are chosen their ambassadors, their priests, their tranibores, and the prince himself, who was anciently called their Barzenes, but now their Athemus.

Each family is governed by its patriarch, and all the males descended from him live in the same house in obedience to him. Every city is divided into four parts, and in the middle of every part is the market-place, where each day all manufactures are laid out, and every father of a family goes thither and supplies himself, without any payment or any exchange, with whatever he may require for the necessities of himself or of those belonging to him. Moreover, each town has four hospitals, built without the walls, which are the first served with provisions, and whatever else they may require, from the market-places; this done, the common dining-halls are served, in which all eat together,

the elder with the younger, in order that the levity of the latter may be restrained within proper bounds.

If a man desire to travel over the country, he must obtain a passport from the prince which certifies the license for travelling, and limits the time of the traveller's absence, the voyager carrying no provisions of any kind with him, but being treated everywhere in every way as if he were at home.

In their great council held at Amaurot every year, to which there are three delegates sent from every town, they inquire the state of each city with regard to provisions, and any one that may chance to be in want is supplied by the others. When the wants of the whole country are supplied, and they have taken care to lay up stores for two years in case of any disaster, they then export the overplus to other countries. One-seventh of this they give to the poor of the countries to which they send, the rest they exchange for iron, gold, and silver; and with the treasure which they thus gain, they are wont in times of war to hire foreign soldiers, whom they are more willing to expose to danger than their own people. They have much gold and silver, upon which, however, they set so little

value that they make of the precious metals fetters and chains for their slaves, and adapt them in other ways to the lowest purposes. Pearls they find on their own coasts, diamonds and carbuncles in their own country, but they use them only for playthings for their own children; and Raphael relates the impression made upon the Utopians during his stay among them by the appearance of the ambassadors of the Anemolians, who, having come arrayed in cloth of gold, and adorned with massive chains, ear-rings; and rings of gold, found themselves, to their great astonishment, looked upon as slaves, and treated with no reverence at all.

With respect to their learning, though they had never heard the names of our great philosophers, yet they had made the same discoveries that the Greeks had, both in music, logic, arithmetic, and geometry. They understood astronomy, but care nothing for astrology, or, as Sir Thomas More terms it, "The cheat of divining by the stars, and by their oppositions or conjunctions." As for moral philosophy, they seem to have the same disputes among them that we have here, and they incline to place the happiness of men chiefly, if not entirely, in pleasure. With regard to religion, they believe that the

soul is immortal, and that God, of his goodness, has designed that it should be happy; that He has, therefore, appointed rewards for good and virtuous actions, and punishments for vice, to be distributed after this life.

The treatment of their sick will put the reader in mind of something that he may have met with in Sir John Maundeville. As long as there is any hope of recovery, everything is done which can possibly tend to increase the comfort and to promote the health of the patient. In the contrary case, the priests and magistrates come and exhort the sick, that since they are now unable to go on with the business of life, and are become a burden to themselves and to all about them, so that they have really outlived themselves, they would choose rather to die at once. Such as are wrought up by these kind persuasions, either starve themselves to death, or take opium; if, however, they prefer to outlive themselves still longer, they receive just as much care and attention as ever.

The Utopians appear also to be remarkable for chastity. Some curious, and we should call them most indelicate, customs seem to prevail among them, which are found under another form in Lord Bacon's "Atlantis;" nor will the

bridegroom accept his bride until he has first satisfied himself, as Burton, in his "Anatomy of Melancholy," tells us that Francis Sforza, Duke of Milan, did with regard to her whom he is about to marry. In the matter of divorce, the regulations of these islanders will remind the reader of Milton's notions, to which they are very similar, for they allow those who do not agree well together to separate by mutual consent, and to find out other persons with whom they may hope to live more happily.

It is not a little curious to find Sir Thomas More, himself a lawyer, banishing lawyers from his "happy republic," as "a sort of people whose profession it is to disguise facts as well as to pervert laws." In his *beau ideal* of what a State should be, every man pleads his own cause, and leaves the issue to the judge. They have but a very small code, and every one is skilled in it; it is but a short study, and the plainest meaning of which the words are capable is always the proper sense. So just are they, that many of those who live in their vicinity have come to them and desired that they would send magistrates among them to be their governors; and this they have done, changing some of them every year, and some of them

every five years. Such States as have come with such a request, they call *neighbours* ; those whom they have more particularly assisted they call friends. War they detest as a very brutal thing ; but they daily accustom themselves to military exercises, and train up even their women, too, in order that in cases of necessity they may not be quite useless in such seasons ; and their only design in ever engaging in war is :—

“To obtain that by force which, if it had been granted to them in time, would have prevented the war ; or, if that cannot be done, to take so severe a revenge upon those who have injured them, that they may be terrified from doing the like in all time coming.”

Their method of carrying on war, however, is about the most atrocious that can well be conceived. They cause large placards to be affixed in all the public places in their enemy's country, in which they offer large rewards to such as will kill the prince, and they double the sum to him that, instead of killing him, shall deliver him alive into their hands ; and Raphael adds, that “the rewards which the Utopians offer are so unmeasurably great, that there is no sort of crime to which men cannot be drawn by them.” If this method does not succeed, they try to sow

the seeds of contention among their enemies, or animate the king's brother, or some of the nobility, to aspire to the crown. If contention arise, they assist their party plentifully enough with money, but very sparingly with any auxiliary troops, "for they are so tender of their own people, that they would not willingly exchange one of them with the prince of their enemy's country." We have before said that they employ, to a great extent, mercenary soldiers, and these are drawn chiefly from the nation of the Zapolites, which lies five hundred miles eastward of Utopia. This is a rude, fierce, wild people, who are always willing to fight for the highest bidders; and as the Utopians can afford to pay higher than any others, the Zapolites are ready to serve them against any people whatever. And certainly, in this matter, More's republicans hardly show to much advantage, for he specially says, that "they are not at all troubled how many of them soever happen to be killed," for they—

"Reckon it a service done to mankind if they could be the means to deliver the world from such a lewd and vicious sort of people, that seem to have run together as to the drain of human nature."

“There are several sorts of religion, not only in different parts of the island, but even in every town; some worshipping the sun, others the moon or one of the planets. Some worship such men as have been eminent in former times for virtue or glory, not only as ordinary deities, but as the supreme God; yet the greater and wiser sort of them worship none of these, but adore one eternal, invisible, infinite, and incomprehensible Deity; as a being that is far above all our apprehensions; that is spread over the whole universe, not by bulk, but by power and virtue; Him they call the Father of all, and acknowledge that the beginnings, the increase, the progress, the vicissitudes, and the end of all things come only from Him; nor do they offer divine honours to any but to Him alone. And, indeed, though they differ concerning other things, yet all agree in this, that they think there is one Supreme Being who made and governs the world, whom they call, in the language of their country, Mithras. They differ in this, that one thinks the God whom *he* worships is this Supreme Being, and another thinks that *his* idol is that God; but they all agree in one principle—that, whatever this Supreme Being is, is also that great Essence to

whose glory and majesty all honours are ascribed by the consent of all nations."

Raphael, however, is a Christian, and when he made known the doctrines of the religion which he professed, "It is not to be imagined," he says, "how inclined they were to receive it." The law amongst the Utopians with reference to this matter, which law was made by Utopus himself, is that of universal toleration; the only severe statutes which they possess upon the subject being directed wholly and solely against atheists. Such men they look upon as unfit even for human society. They do not punish them, but they never advance them to any honours and dignities, or employ them in any public trust, and they despise them as men of base and ignoble minds. A calm and happy death they look upon as an evidence of goodness and acceptance with God; an uneasy and unwilling death they, on the contrary, look upon with horror; the former they celebrate with hymns of joy, and with many glad ceremonies; the latter they remember only with sorrow, and pray to God that He will be merciful to the errors of the departed soul: they have, moreover, hermits among them, but they do not appear to be held in very great esteem.

The priests are few in number—thirteen in every town, one for each temple in it. They are chosen by the people, and are consecrated by the college of priests. They have the care of all sacred things, and the worship of God, and an inspection into the manners of the people are committed to them; and the punishment of all others most dreaded by the Utopians, is that of excommunication by the priest.

The education of the young also forms a part of their duty. They have magnificent temples, but no images are found in them. The first and last day of every month and year are festivals. On the last day they assemble in the temples and thank God for their good success during the year or month just ended, and the next day meet again to pray for a blessing upon their affairs during the year or month just begun. On these occasions all differences are made up between those who have been at enmity, for they believe they cannot offer their sacrifices acceptably so long as they are conscious of any hatred or angry feeling in their hearts. The people present themselves in the temple in white garments, the priests in parti-coloured vestments. The service consists of prayers, and hymns, and praises, and thanks-

givings, very much after the fashion of our own services, and concludes with a petition that, if such a wish may be entertained without derogating from His supreme authority, God will see fit to take them both easily and soon to Himself.

And thus concludes the description of "The Happy Republic," of which More observes in his own person, that "though he cannot agree in everything, yet there are many things in the Commonwealth of Utopia that he rather wishes than hopes to see followed in our Government," which words seem to bear out Bishop Burnet in his opinion, that the author "intended to set many notions in his reader's way, and that he might not seem too much in earnest, he went so far out all roads to do it the less suspected." There is much, to use Burnet's expression, of "rough and fierce philosophy;" in some parts of the work there is cruelty and some immorality. There is a great want, too, of the interest which Plato excites in his philosophical dialogues, as well by his glowing language as by the greater dramatic action which he introduces. In fact, in these respects, but in no others, the *Utopia* is probably not equal to the *New Atlantis* of Lord Bacon.

Yet this important work derives still further importance from the fact that Sir Thomas More not only depicts what he considers should be the condition of a great and free country by his descriptions of Utopia, but he frequently speaks directly of his own, and many of his observations will be held as applicable in some parts of our land even now, as they were in the days of Henry VIII. Take, for instance, what he says about sheep-farms. It is said that in the single reign of Henry VIII., "seventy thousand thieves, great and small, suffered death for their crimes"—at all events, the English, at that time, were universally regarded as the most thievish nation in Europe.

"'But,' says Raphael, 'I do not think that this necessity of stealing arises only from hence; there is another cause of it that is more peculiar to England.' 'What is that?' said the cardinal. 'The increase of pasture,' said I, 'by which your sheep, that are naturally mild, and easily kept in order, may be said now to devour men, and unpeople not only villages, but towns; for wherever it is found that the sheep of any soil yield a softer and richer wool than ordinary, there the nobility and gentry, and even those holy men the abbots, not contented with the old rents which their

farms yielded, nor thinking it enough that they, living at their ease, do no good to the public, resolve to do it hurt instead of good. They stop the course of agriculture, inclose grounds, and destroy houses and towns, reserving only the churches, that they may lodge their sheep in them; and as if forests and parks had swallowed up too little soil, those worthy countrymen turn the best inhabited places into solitudes, for when any insatiable wretch, who is a plague to his country, resolves to inclose many thousand acres of ground, the owners, as well as tenants, turned out of their possessions by tricks, or by main force, or being wearied out with ill-usage, they are forced to sell them. So those miserable people, both men and women, married and unmarried, old and young, with their poor but numerous families (since country business requires many hands), are all forced to change their seats, not knowing whither to go; and they must sell for almost nothing their household stuff, which could not bring them much money, even though they might stay for a buyer. When that little money is at an end, for it will soon be spent, what is left for them to do, but either to steal, and so be hanged (God knows how justly!), or to go and beg? And if

they do this they are put in prison as idle vagabonds, whereas they would willingly work, but can find none that will hire them; for there is no more occasion for country labour, to which they have been bred, when there is no arable ground left. One shepherd can look after a flock which will stock an extent of ground that would require many hands if it were to be ploughed and reaped. This likewise raises the price of corn in many places. The price of wool is also risen, that the poor people, who were wont to make cloth, are no more able to buy it, and this likewise makes many of them idle; for since the increase of pasture, God has punished the avarice of the owners by a rot among the sheep, which has destroyed vast numbers of them, but had been more justly laid upon the owners themselves. But suppose the sheep should increase ever so much, their price is not likely to fall, since, though they cannot be called a monopoly, because they are not engrossed by one person, yet they are in so few hands, and these are so rich, that as they are not pressed to sell them sooner than they have a mind to it, so they never do till they have raised the price as high as is possible. And on the same account it is that the other kinds of cattle are so dear; and so

much the more, because that many villages being pulled down, and all country labour being much neglected, there are none to look after the breeding of them. The rich do not heed cattle as they do sheep, but buy them lean, and at low prices, and, after they have fattened them on their grounds, they sell them again at high rates. And I do not think that all the inconveniences that this will produce are yet observed, for as they sell the cattle dear, so if they are consumed faster than the breeding countries from which they are brought can afford them, then the stock must decrease, and this must needs end in a great scarcity; and by these means, this, your island, that seemed, as to this particular, the happiest in the world, will suffer much by the cursed avarice of a few persons; besides that, the raising the price of corn makes all people lessen their families as much as they can; and what can those who are dismissed by them do but either beg or rob?"

We quote the following as a very curious specimen of the table-talk of Sir Thomas More's guests, and as showing the liberties which were not unfrequently taken with the clergy:—

"I do not know whether it be worth the while to tell what followed, for it was very ridi-

culous ; but I shall venture at it, for as it is not foreign to this matter, so some good use may be made of it. There was a jester standing by that counterfeited the fool so naturally that he seemed to be really one. The jests which he offered were so cold and dull, that we laughed more at him than at them, yet sometimes he said as it were by chance some that were not unpleasant, so as to justify the old proverb, 'that he who throws the dice often will sometimes have a lucky hit.' When one of the company had said that I had taken care of the thieves, and the cardinal had taken care of the vagabonds, so that there remained nothing but that some public provision might be made for the poor, whom sickness or old age had disabled from labour, 'Leave that to me,' said the fool, 'and I shall take care of them, for there is no sort of people whose sight I abhor more, having been so often vexed with them and their sad complaints ; but, as dolefully soever as they have told their tale to me, they could never prevail so far as to draw one penny of money from me ; for either I had no mind to give them anything, or, when I had a mind to it, I had nothing to give them ; and they now know me so well, that they will not

lose their labour on me, but let me pass without giving me any trouble, because they hope for nothing from me, no more, in faith, than if I were a priest. But I would have a law made for sending all these beggars to monasteries—the men to the Benedictines to be lay brothers, and the women to be nuns.’

“The cardinal smiled, and approved of the jest; but the rest liked it in earnest. There was a divine present who, though he was a grave, morose man, yet he was so pleased with the reflection that was made on the priests and monks that he began to play with the fool, and said to him, ‘This will not deliver you from all beggars, except you take care of us friars.’ ‘That is already done,’ answered the fool; ‘for the cardinal has provided for you by what he proposed for the restraining vagabonds, and setting them to work; for I know no vagabonds like you.’ This was well entertained by the whole company, who, looking at the cardinal, perceived that he was not ill-pleased at it, only the friar himself was so bit, as may be easily imagined, and fell out in such a passion that he could not forbear railing at the fool, and calling him knave, slanderer, backbiter, and son of per-

dition, and cited some dreadful threatenings out of the Scriptures against him. Now the jester thought he was in his element, and laid about him freely. He said, 'Good friar, be not angry, for it is written, In patience possess your soul.' The friar answered (for I shall give you his own words), 'I am not angry, you hangman; at least I do not sin in it. For the Psalmist says, Be ye angry and sin not.' Upon this the cardinal admonished him gently, and wished him to govern his passions. 'No, my lord,' said he, 'I speak not but from a good zeal, which I ought to have, for holy men have a good zeal, as it is said, The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up. And we sing in our church, that those who mocked Elisha as he went up to the house of God felt the effects of his zeal, which that mocker, that rogue, that scoundrel, will perhaps feel.' 'You do this, perhaps, with a good intention,' said the cardinal, 'but in my opinion it were wiser in you, not to say better of you, not to engage in so ridiculous a contest with a fool.' 'No, my lord,' answered he, 'that was not wisely done; for Solomon, the wisest of men, said, Answer a fool according to his folly, which I now do, and show him the ditch into which he will

fall, if he is not aware of it ; for if the many mockers of Elisha, who was but one bald man, felt the effects of his zeal, what will become of one mocker of so many friars, among whom there are so many bald men? We have likewise a bull by which all that jeer us are excommunicated.' When the cardinal saw that there was no end of this matter, he made a sign to the fool to withdraw, and turned the discourse another way. And soon after he rose from the table, and, dismissing us, he went to hear causes."

From the specimens which have been given, the reader will probably regard the *Utopia* rather as a literary curiosity than as a work of much practical value. It is inartistic in construction, ungraceful in style, and reflects more credit on its author for having dared to speak so plainly to a prince like Henry VIII., than for any genius displayed in the work itself.

The limits of this note will not permit any examination of the *Nova Atlantis* of Lord Bacon, which may be considered as a copy, and not a very successful one, of the *Utopia*. It closes the chapter of what may be called *constructive* romances. Of the prose satire—for so, notwithstanding its narrative form, the more

modern political romance may be denominated—the two most illustrious examples are Dean Swift's "Travels of Captain Lemuel Gulliver," and that which in these volumes is presented to the reader.

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